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ROBERT LEIGHTON, D.D.

THE

# WHOLE WORKS

1859.

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THE

# WHOLE WORKS

OF

# ROBERT LEIGHTON, D.D.,

ARCHBISHOP OF GLASGOW.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

## A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

BY

JOHN NORMAN PEARSON, M. A.,

OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

Οὕτω θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων θειων καὶ εὐδαιμόνων βίος, ἀπαλλαγὴ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν τῇδε, βίος, ἀνήδονος τῶν φῇδε. μυγὴ νόνου πρὸς μόνον.—PLOTINI ENNEAD. 6 L. c. xi. 9.

WITH A TABLE OF THE TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE,

AND AN INDEX OF THE SUBJECTS,

COMPILED EXPRESSLY FOR THIS EDITION.

NEW YORK:

ROBERT CARTER AND BROTHERS,

580 BROADWAY.

1859.

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# NOTICE.

HAVING determined to issue the most perfect edition which could possibly be compiled of the works of Archbishop LEIGHTON, it became an object of solicitude to procure the best European copies of his writings. Two editions, one published in London, in 1835, and the other at Edinburgh, in 1840, were designated as the most approved standard compilations. Upon a careful examination, however, it was discovered that the London work comprised materials which were not inserted in the Edinburgh edition, and that the latter included some articles not found in the English copy. That this American reprint, therefore, might not be defective, it was resolved to combine the whole which was found in both series. This volume, therefore, is the only copy which contains the entire literary remains of the renowned author.

But it was also perceived that both of the British editions exhibited a great defect. Neither of them possessed any reference at all to the subjects which the learned theologian had discussed; so that the reader was utterly at a loss to ascertain in what part of the two volumes he must look for the illustration of either of the multifarious topics which the writer had imbodied in his commentaries, exhortations, lectures, meditations, sermons, and other expository discussions. This deficiency applied not only to the texts of Scripture, but also to the themes; thus leaving the student in complete perplexity, and depriving the reader of all that benefit which arises from the prompt acquisition of the knowledge that might be attained: giving him useless labor in research, and often wasting his time and toil for utter disappointment. To remedy that defect, and to facilitate the utility and edification comprised in this most important collection of theological disquisitions, and to render the work complete, two indexes have been prepared expressly for this edition. The first is a table of the texts of Scripture which are introduced, either as themes, or as corroborative proofs, which latter use of them often is equivalent to a comment. The second is a comprehensive and minute catalogue of all the principal subjects which are imbodied in the whole series of Archbishop Leighton's works.

The Publisher was induced thus to enhance the value of this edition, by the eminent rank which the Exposition of the First Epistle of Peter has attained—of which it has been pronounced, that an expository work upon any portion of the sacred volume can

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not be named, which, for exalted devotion, and richness of evangelical sentiment, equals the annotations of Leighton. Moreover, the pre-eminence of the author himself requires that his works should be presented to the American public in the most complete form practicable. His matchless superiority over all his ecclesiastical contemporaries in Scotland, is known to all persons conversant with the history of the stormy period during which he resided in that part of Britain; of which the Memoirs prefixed, and the Appendix, display ample and convincing proof. Mr. Pearson's narrative, and the addenda by Mr. Aikman, present to us a charming biographical portraiture; with illustrations of the perilous times during which the Archbishop lived, that enhance both the interest and value of the volume.

New York, *June* 13, 1844.

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# THE LIFE

OF

# ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON.

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The name of Leighton occurs in some of the oldest annals of Scottish history. It belonged to a reputable family, proprietary of the barony of Ulishaven, otherwise called Usan, which is a demesne in Craig, a considerable fishing-village in the county of Forfar. Of this name the spelling is very various, as will commonly be the case with the patronymic of a family of which the scattered vestiges appear, at wide intervals, in the wilderness of the unlettered ages. It is spelt Leichtoune, Lichtoun, Lyghton, Lighton, and in several other fashions, which are not respectively fixed to certain dates, but seem to have obtained indiscriminately in the same ras. One may remark, however, that the n odern orthography of the name is the same which presents itself in registers of the greatest antiquity. In the Rotuli Scotiæ, which have lately been published from the original records in the Tower, we read that A. D. 1374, John de Leighton, clericus de Scotiâ, obtained a safe-conduct to Oxford, there to prosecute his studies. Whether or not this zealot of literature were of the Usan race can not now be certainly determined. To the ancestors of that family, however, may be assigned the meed of sturdy warriors, on the authority of a quaint chronicle which relates, that

> "Schir Walter of Ogilvy, that gud knycht,
> Stout and manful, bauld and wycht,"

being sheriff of Angus, was killed in 1392 at Gasklune or Glenbrerith near Blairgowrie in Perthshire, by a party of three hundred Highlanders. Ogilvy, with Sir Patrick Gray, Sir David Lindsay of Glenesk, and about sixty men encountered the enemy. Gray and Lindsay were wounded; and Sir Walter Ogilvy, his uterine brother, Walter Leighton of Ulishaven. and some of their friends, were killed.

Besides this testimony to the prowess of a Leighton in the days of feudal lawlessness, there is proof of the same family, in the beginning of the fifteenth century, having been inscribed in the lists of ecclesiastical dignity and political importance. Mention is made by Keith, in his Catalogue of Scottish Bishops, of one Henry Leighton, parson of Duffus and chantor of Moray, "legum doctor et baccalaureus in decretis," a son of the ancient family of the Leightons of Ulishaven, who was consecrated Bishop of Moray, in 1414 or 1415, and was translated about ten years afterward to the see of Aberdeen. He was one of the commissioners sent to London to negotiate the ransom of James I., with whom he returned to Scotland; where he is supposed to have died A. D. 1441.

Although it may be received for a fact, that the subject of our memoir was descended of this ancient and respectable family, yet it has been found impossible to trace all the steps of his pedigree. The family itself had undoubtedly declined in wealth and credit, before the birth of the individual, who was destined to reflect upon it a new and transcendent lustre: for it is on record that, A. D. 1619, a part at least of its original estates had been alienated; and in 1670, there is a grant under the great seal to Charles Maitland of Halton of the barony of Ulishaven, escheated to the king by the death of John, Earl of Dundee, without male issue.

The father of Archbishop Leighton was Dr. Alexander Leighton, a presbyterian clergyman of unhappy celebrity. His sufferings and the causes of them are notorious. In the reign of Charles I., he was sentenced by the Star-Chamber, for a virulent attack upon episcopacy, to be whipped and pilloried, to have his ears cropped, his nose slit, and his cheeks branded. This barbarous punishment was rigorously inflicted; and to it were superadded, during a long imprisonment, such atrocious severities, as savored more of vindictive malignity than of judicial retribution. No apology would be valid, or even decent, for cruelties, which were alike revolting to justice, to humanity, and to religion. That the wretched sufferer, however, was of a cross, untowardly disposition,

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may be conjectured from his having brought himself under the lash of the law, in the preceding reign, by stubbornly refusing to abandon the irregular practice of medicine. There is a fact, moreover, not generally known, which may account for the extreme rigor with which his subsequent offences were visited. Not only was the book, for which he was so maltreated, and which is entitled "Zion's Plea against Prelacy," outrageously scurrilous and inflammatory in its contents, but there were collateral circumstances attending its publication, that betokened a mischievous purpose in the writer. In the first edition, neither the name of the author nor of the printer is given, and instead of the date in the usual way, we find —"Printed the year and moneth wherein Rochell was lost." The frontispiece exhibits on one page a lamp burning, supported by a book, and guarded by two men with drawn swords; which hieroglyphic is explained by the legend: —

"Prevailing prelats strive to quench our light,
Except your sacred power quash their might."

On the other page is the representation of an antique, dilapidated tower. Out of its ruins grows an elder-bush, from the branches of which several bishops are tumbling, one of them holding in his hand a large box. This device is interpreted by the motto:—

"The tottering prelats, with their trumpery, all,
Shall moulder down, like elder from a wall."

The place of Archbishop Leighton's birth has been much debated It is commonly believed that he was a native of London; on the strength, I imagine, of Burnet's assertion, that he was sent thence to be educated in Scotland. This, however, is inferring too much: for he may have been carried up, in his infancy, from Scotland to London, when his father settled in that city. Craig also claims him for her son: but this claim seems to have no stronger foundation, than the fact of his direct or collateral ancestors having been considerable proprietors in that village: a fact too weak to sustain the hypothesis raised on it by the inhabitants, through a virtuous solicitude to make out their affinity with so eminent a person. To my mind there are unanswerable reasons for assigning that distinction to Edinburgh. In the inscription on his tombstone, Leighton is said to have died in his 74th year; and deducting 73 from 1684, the undisputed year of his decease, we shall have 1611 for the year of his nativity. The same amount is obtained by deducting 30, the number of his years when he took orders, from 1641, which is the date of that transaction. Now his father was at that time professor of moral philosophy in Edinburgh college, and did not go up to London until two years afterward;* and it is certainly to be presumed, not a shadow of evidence appearing to the contrary, that the son was born in the place wherein the father was then residing. He had one brother, of whom mention will be made hereafter, who was younger than he; and two sisters, one of whom was married to a Mr. Lightmaker, a gentleman of landed property in Sussex; and the other to Mr. Rathband, as appears from a single allusion in one of her brother's letters.

Of his early years there is left but a scanty though valuable notice. It comes to us on the unquestionable authority of his sister, that his singular teachableness and piety, from his tenderest age, endeared him greatly to his parents; who used to speak with admiration of his extraordinary exemption from childish faults and follies.

At college his behavior was so uniformly excellent, as to attract the notice of his superiors; and one of them, in a letter to Dr. Leighton, congratulates him on having a son, in whom Providence has made him abundant compensation for his sufferings. There is still in existence a humorous poem on Dr. Aikenhead, warden of the college, which Leighton wrote when an undergraduate. It evinces a good-natured playfulness of fancy, but it not of a merit that calls for publication.

After taking his degree, Leighton passed several years in travel, and in the studies proper to qualify him for future usefulness. It was his mature opinion, that great advantages are to be reaped from a residence in foreign parts; inasmuch as a large acquaintance with the sentiments of strangers, and with the civil and religious institutions, the manners and usages of other countries, conduces to unshackle the mind of indigenous prejudices, to abate the self-sufficiency of partial knowledge, and to produce a sober and charitable estimate of opinions that differ from our own. Many years afterward, he recommended a similar course to his nephew, alleging, that "there is a very peculiar advantage in travel, not to be understood but by the trial of it; and that for himself he nowise repented the time he had spent in that way."

During his stay abroad, Leighton was often at Douay, where some of his relations were settled. In this seminary he appears to have met with some religionists, whose lives were framed on the strictest model of primitive piety. Though keenly alive to the faults of popery, he did not consider the Romish church to be utterly antichristian; but thought he discerned in it beautiful fragments of the original temple, however disfigured with barbarous additions, and almost hid beneath the rampant growth of a baleful superstition. Having learnt from these better portions of that corrupt establishment, that its constitutions were not altogether dross, he went on to discover that the frame of his own church was not entirely gold

* See Chalmer's Biograph. Dict.

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nor did it escape him, that in the indiscriminate extermination, so clamorously demanded in Scotland, of all those offices of devotion, which symbolized with the Roman catholic services, there would be swept away some of the noblest formularies and most useful institutes of the primitive church. It was probably from this period that his veneration for the presbyterian platform began to abate.

He was thirty years old before he took holy orders; and in postponing it to so ripe an age his entrance on the ministry, as well as in retiring so early as he did from its more laborious province, he acted agreeably to his avowed opinion, that "some men preach too soon, and some too long." His judgment of what is most reverent toward God corresponded with those canons of the Levitical economy, which prescribe a mature age for engaging in the more arduous department of the sacerdotal office, and grant an honorable superannuation at that period of life, when the strength of mind and body commonly begins to decay. It was on the sixteenth day of December, A. D. 1641, that Leighton was ordained and admitted minister of Newbottle, in Midlothian, a parish in the presbytery of Dalkeith. All diligence has been used to retrieve traditional reminiscences of the manner in which this holy man discharged the duties of the office, in undertaking which he had evinced so much religious caution. But research has been fruitless. No distinct traces remain of those parochial ministrations, which doubtless fill an ample page in that book of the Divine remembrance, from which no work of faith, no labor of love, is ever obliterated.

Of the general tenor, however, of his life and ministerial occupations, we have a few short but invaluable notices in Burnet's History of his own Time. Engrossed with the care of his parish, he seldom mixed in the convocations of the presbyters, whose practice of descanting on the Covenant from the pulpit he greatly disapproved; and still more their stern determination to force that bitter morsel on conscientious objectors. It was his aim not to win proselytes to a party, but converts to Jesus Christ. And exemplary indeed must he have been, since the picture of a finished evangelist, which his intimate friend has drawn in the beautiful Discourse of the Pastoral Care, was correctly copied from the lively pattern exhibited by Leighton. Yet the blameless sanctity of his manners, his professional excellence, and his studious inoffensiveness, were not enough to content the zealots of his church. In a synod he was publicly reprimanded for not "preaching up the times." "Who," he asked, "does preach up the times?" It was answered that all the brethren did it. "Then," he rejoined, "if all of you preach up the times, you may surely allow one poor brother to preach up Christ Jesus and eternity."

Although Leighton was averse, both by temper and principle, from meddling with politics, yet there were certain conjunctures of perplexity and peril, in which he though himself bound to set an example to his flock of intrepid loyalty. In the year 1648, he acceded to the Engagement for the King; a step which would have involved him in serious trouble with the republican government, but for the interposition of the Earl of Lothian, and the charms of his personal character. When the Engagement expired, in the discomfiture of those enterprises to which it had given birth, he was placed in a very delicate predicament; in which, however, his behavior was not less creditable to his political discretion, than to his Christian boldness and integrity. Called upon in his official capacity to admonish some of his parishioners, after they had made a public profession of repentance, for being actively concerned in that Engagement to which he himself had subscribed, he directed their consciences to the many offences against morality and religion which they had committed in the course of their military service; and of these, without touching on the grounds of the expedition and the merits of their cause, he solemnly charged them to repent.

About this time, we find him in correspondence with several of the episcopal clergy, and especially with Bishop Burnet's father. His mind seems to have been led by observation of the faults under which the presbyterian disciple labors, to an attentive examination of the episcopal form, against which he had imbibed the strongest aversion with his mother's milk; an aversion, which would gather strength from sympathy with his father, of whose martyrdom, as he would be taught to esteem it, his soul must have drunk in a deep resentment. Although Leighton never considered any particular mode of ecclesiastical polity a point of sufficient moment to justify schism, yet it is clear that from this time he regarded the episcopal model as adapted, beyond any other, to the edification of the church universal. Assuredly it was no prospect of secular preferment that helped him to shake off the prepossessions of his early years; for his worldly interest pointed another way. Besides, conversions to which unrighteous motives have conduced, are usually characterized by extraordinary bitterness against the deserted party; whereas Leighton, after he was become a moderate episcopalian, breathed nothing but good-will and kindness toward his former associates. He wholly sequestered himself, indeed, from their legislative conclaves, and at length relinquished his cure. But he took this last step, not from any scruple about continuing to officiate in a church framed on the Genevese platform, but from a hearty repugnance to that system of spiritual despotism, which had been linked



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by violent and ambitious men with the cause of the presbytery.

It must have been in the latter part of his residence at Newbottle that a calamity befell him, which elicited a striking manifestation of his indifference to money, of his large-heartedness and piety. At his father's death, he came into possession of about a thousand pounds; which sum was, in fact, his whole property. This he placed, or suffered to remain, in the hands of a merchant without adequate security; notwithstanding the remonstrances of Mr. Lightmaker, his brother-in-law, who urged him to come up to London and vest it more safely. Leighton's reply to this good counsel is very characteristic.

"SIR: I thank you for your letter. That you give me notice of I desire to consider as becomes a Christian, and to prepare to wait for my own removal. What business follows upon my father's may be well enough done without me, as I have writ more at large to Mr. E——, and desired him to show you the letter when you meet. Any pittance belonging to me may possibly be useful and needful for my subsistence; but truly, if something else draw me not, I shall never bestow so long a journey on that I account so mean a business. Remember my love to my sister your wife, and to my brother and sister Rathband, as you have opportunity. I am glad to hear of the welfare of you all, and above all things, wish for myself and you all our daily increase in likeness to Jesus Christ, and growing heavenward, where he is who is our treasure. To his grace I recommend you.

"Sir, your affectionate brother,
"R. LEIGHTON.

"*December* 31, 1649."

Before long, the event anticipated by Mr. Lightmaker took place. The merchant failed, and Leighton's patrimony was irretrievably lost. How he took this misfortune may be learned from the following letter to his brother-in-law:—

"SIR: Your kind advice I can not but thank you for, but I am not easily taught that lesson. I confess it is the wiser way to trust nobody; but there is so much of the fool in my nature as carries me rather to the other extreme, to trust everybody. Yet I will endeavor to take the best courses I can in that little business you write of. It is true there is a lawful, yea a needful diligence in such things; but, alas! how poor are they to the portion of believers, where our treasure is.

"That little that was in Mr. E.'s hands hath failed me; but I shall either have no need of it, or be supplied some other way. And this is the relief of my rolling thoughts, that while I am writing this, this moment is passing away, and all the hazards of want and sickness shall be at an end. My mother writes to me, and presses my coming up. I know not yet if that can be; but I intend, God willing, so soon as I can conveniently if I come not, to take some course that things be done as if I were there. I hope you will have patience in the meantime. Remember my love to my sisters. The Lord be with you, and lead you in his ways

"Your loving brother,
"R. LEIGHTON.

"*Newbottle, Feb.* 4, 1650."

Being in England some time afterward, his recent loss was touched upon by Mr. Lightmaker, who regretted that he had so sadly misplaced his confidence. "Oh! no more of that," cried Leighton; "the good man has escaped from the care and vexation of that business." "What, is that all you make of the matter?" rejoined his brother-in-law with surprise. "Truly," answered the other, "if the Duke of Newcastle, after losing nineteen times as much of yearly income, can dance and sing, while the solid hopes of Christianity will not avail to support us, we had better be as the world."

Somewhere about this time—for the date can not be assigned with certainty—there happened an accident which drew forth a proof of his admirable self-possesion in the sudden prospect of death. He had taken the water at the Savoy stairs, in company with his brother Sir Ellis, his lady, and some others, and was on his way to Lambeth, when, owing to some mismanagement, the boat was in imminent danger of going to the bottom. While the rest of the party were pale with terror, and most of them crying out, Leighton never for a moment lost his accustomed serenity. To some, who afterward expressed their astonishment at his calmness, he replied: "Why, what harm would it have been, if we had all been safe landed on the other side?" In the habit of dying daily, and of daily conversing with the world of spirits, he could never be surprised or disconcerted by a summons to depart out of the body.

Another anecdote of him, which bears witness to his devout equanimity on perilous occasions, belongs to this period of his history. During the civil wars, when the royalist army was lying in Scotland, Leighton was anxious to visit his brother, who bore arms in the king's service, before an engagement which was daily expected should take place. On his way to the camp he was benighted in the midst of a vast thicket; and having deviated from the path, he sought in vain for an outlet. Almost spent with fatigue and hunger, he began to think his situation desperate, and dismounting he spread his cloak upon the ground, and knelt down to pray. With implicit devotion he resigned his soul to God; entreating, however, that if it were not the divine pleasure for him then to conclude his days, some way of deliverance might be opened. Then remounting

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his horse, he threw the reins upon its neck; and the animal, left to itself, or rather to the conduct of an Almighty Providence, made straight into the high road, thridding all the mazes of the wood with unerring certainty.

In the year 1652, after eleven years of close residence on his cure, Leighton tendered his resignation to the presbytery. At first it was declined, but in the year following they were induced to accept it; and on Feb. 3, 1653, his ministerial connexion with Newbottle was dissolved. Shortly after this affair, he was chosen primar or principal of the university of Edinburgh, a situation which he was prevailed upon to accept, because it was totally unconnected with the church as a body politic. It was hardly possible that, at such a period of civil dissension, his election should be unanimous; but although it was not cordially approved of by all parties, yet such was the homage paid to his uncommon merit, that it encountered no direct opposition. It appears that, upon the death of Principal Adamson in 1652, Mr. William Colville, at that time minister of the English church at Utrecht, was elected. But in consequence of "some obstructions" (as the phrase runs in the Council Register of Edinburgh), the nature of which is not explained, the election was set aside on the 17th of January, 1653, one year's stipend being allowed to the deposed warden, to compensate his trouble and expense in coming over from Holland. As this gentlemen was known for his monarchical principles, it is probable that the obstructions hinted at proceeded from Oliver Cromwell; for it is certain that, about this time, the principals of King's college, Aberdeen, of Glasgow, and of St. Andrew's, paid the forfeit of their stubborn loyalty with their academical places. The selfsame day on which the office was declared vacant, Leighton was chosen to it. The ministers of the city, who were partial to Colville, a man of real worth and talent, assisted at the election of his successor in obedience to the charter, but refused to concur in it; at the same time expressing a wish that their attendance could have been dispensed with, "since they were content with the man, though not clear in the manner of the call."*

In this situation he was eminently useful. One of his earliest measures was to revive the obsolete practice of delivering, once in the week, a Latin lecture on some theological subject. These prelections, which are fortunately preserved, attracted such general admiration, that the public hall in which he pronounced them used to be thronged with auditors, who were all enchanted with the purity of his style, and with his animated delivery. To the students under his care he was indefatigably attentive, instructing them singly as well as collectively; and to many youths of capacity and distinction his wise and affectionate exhortations were lastingly beneficial.

Of his proceedings, while he held this academical post, some particulars are extant, which bespeak him gifted with talents for active business. Two years after his appointment, he was deputed by the Provost and Council, to apply to the Protector in London, for an augmentation of the revenues of the college. A minute of the Town Council Register indicates that his mission was successful.

The year following, he called the attention of the magistrates to a report of some suspicious houses having been detected in the neighborhood of the college; and the effectual measures were set on foot, at his instigation, for extirpating the nuisance.

Neither was he regardless of those subordinate establishments, to which, as they were not comprehended within the immediate circle of his duties, a principal of austerer dignity, or of inferior zeal, might not have condescended. Observing that the collegians made little way in the higher branches of science and literature, he searched into the cause of their deficiency, and quickly found it in the want of a sound rudimental education. For the cure of this evil he proposed that grammar-schools should be founded in the several presbyteries, and be suitably endowed; and he advised that Cromwell should be solicited to assign the funds requisite for this purpose "out of the concealed revenues of the Kirk rents." He further recommended that some elementary grammar, part English and part Latin, should be compiled for the use of these seminaries; and in order to take immediate advantage of the Protector's bounty, should he graciously accede to their petition, he moved that instructions be issued forthwith to magistrates, ministers, and masters of families, enjoining them to set about obtaining a "Locality" for the proposed establishments.

In the same year he offered to preach in the college hall to the scholars, once on the sabbath of every third or fourth week, taking turns with the professors; an offer which appears to have been accepted by the Town Council.

Bound up with the book entitled Naphtali, is a letter from James Mitchell, the stern fanatic, who suffered for his attempt on the life of Archbishop Sharp. In this letter he vindicates himself for the part he took in the Pentland insurrection, on the ground of his having been required, at college, to subscribe the National Covenant, and the Solemn League and Covenant, which were tendered to him along with the other candidates for Laureation, A. D. 1656, by the Principal Leighton.* There seems no reason to question the veracity of this statement. It was quite consistent with Leighton's princi-

* See Bower's Hist. of the Univ. of Edin., vol. i., pp. 261, 263, &c.

* See Naphtali, 1761, p. 373; and Wodrow MSS.

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ples to submit to existing authorities; and to consider this or the other form of government, whether in church or state, a point of vastly inferior importance to concord and quietness. Against the matter of the covenants he seems not to have entertained, at that time, any strong objection, but only to their being made engines of tyrannizing over men's consciences, and oppressing their persons. Assuredly he would not himself have issued an order for withholding degrees from the scholars till they had professed their allegiance to the dominant system. Still it would be a high pitch of censoriousness, to find Leighton in fault for proposing to the students, in his official capacity, a test of their attachment to the existing order of things; it being certain, moreover, that the majority would accept it cordially, and the pain of declining it being only the suspension of an academical degree.

Leighton retained the situation of Principal in the University of Edinburgh till the year 1662, when a very unexpected call obliged him to resign it; and his successor was the same Mr. Colville, into whose chair he had been preferred, when that gentleman's election was superseded by Cromwell, as related above.

The course of our history has brought us to an epoch, which may be reckoned the most important of Leighton's life;—the epoch of his inauguration to the episcopal office in Scotland. It was not to be expected that this son of a noted confessor in the cause of ecclesiastical parity should be allowed to transfer his allegiance to prelacy, without incurring censures of the sharpest edge. In the spring-tide of religious and civil bigotry, such a deed was sure to undergo the most unfavorable construction; for even in the present day, when every grudge has died away between the two national churches, Presbyterian writers commonly regard this transaction as a sable spot on the character of Leighton, which it is a large stretch of charity to impute solely to a misleading judgment. Being myself satisfied, after attentive examination, that neither his understanding nor his heart was in the wrong on this occasion, I shall hope to be excused if I attempt to set his conduct in its true light, by prefacing the particulars of his elevation to the bench, with a succinct account of the religious condition of Scotland at that period.

Charles II., when first he recovered the usurped throne of his fathers, was welcomed with every demonstration of delight. To the eyes of an excited multitude, his return was that of a tutelary deity, whose exile had shed a blight upon their wealth and happiness, and with whose presence their civil and religious prosperity was identified. Throughout the country this event was celebrated with intemperate festivities. The whole nation was in a phrensy of joy, and seemed anxious to indemnify itself for the restraints which puritanical austerity had imposed, by giving the loose reign to indulgences that were but too congenial with the young king's disposition, and that fostered in him those licentious habits which have consigned his reign to the most ignominious page of English history. It is remarkable that Scotland shared largely, as Kirkton pathetically owns, in the popular intoxication. A covenanted p' ce established on the throne of the British nds, was such a proud spectacle, as unhinged the habitual sobriety of the rigid presbyterians; and the few who escaped the extensive contagion sought lonely places and wept, declaring that this "mirth ran in too carnal a strain," to betoken any good to the cause in which it originated.

The state of the English church at this juncture is so generally known, that to describe it would be superflous. By the iron hand of Cromwell episcopacy had been displaced, to make way for the congregational discipline which was brought in over the heads of the outwitted and indignant presbyterians. But the temper of the English nation was ill-suited to this ecclesiastical constitution, which was generally borne with impatience, and melted away like a snow-wreath, the instant it felt the touch of reviving monarchy. Little time was lost in removing the intrusive ministers from the benefices, colleges, and other preferments of which they had possessed themselves; nor did any material disturbance result from the discontent of the ousted party. In the facility with which the re-establishment of episcopacy was effected, there was nothing to surprise a considerate observer. The Cranmers, the Ridleys, the Latimers, the Hoopers, the Jewels, who had borne the brunt of that dreadful contest in which this nation burst the chains of a debasing superstition; these mitred confessors and martyrs were canonized in every English bosom; whereas of the advantages peculiar to the presbyterian economy, the experience had been short and unsatisfactory. Hence no movement could be easier in England than a recurrence to the episcopal constitution.

But far other were the predilections of our northern brethren. However just the claim of episcopacy may be to the filial reverence of the church of Scotland, it is nevertheless notorious that, at the dawn of the Reformation, the dignitaries of that church opposed the current of popular feeling and opinion; and by cruelties not less impolitic than wicked, exasperated to the utmost a nation always strongly tenacious of its sentiments, and of its resentments of real or supposed injuries. The reformation of Scotland originated with teachers of the Lutheran persuasion, by whom neither a liturgical service, nor a graduated scale of ecclesiastical authorities, was accounted a popish abomination. But some of Calvin's disciples, to whom it fell to complete the excellent work, not content

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with introducing their master's doctrinal code as the only true interpretation of the gospel, coupled with it his plan of church polity, as hardly inferior in sanctity and importance to his theological system itself. None but a novice in human nature will be indignant at the early reformers for pushing to an enormous extent their abhorrence of whatever savored of popery. Yet assuredly it was excessive. Those especially of the Genevese church seem to have measured their proximity to the sound and wholesome institutes of Christ and his apostles, by their remoteness from whatever obtained in Rome, whether of doctrine or discipline; and this sentiment, not feeble in its influence on the minds of the educated teachers, became fierce and outrageous through its union with animal passions, when transfused into the breasts of the uncivilized multitude.

To Knox, and to his fellow-helpers in cleansing the Scottish temple, the homage of reformed Christendom is due. Chieftains were they among heroes,

"Giants of mighty bone and bold emprise,"

who achieved what men of the plebeian standard would not have dared even to contemplate; and whose successes in a warfare of extraordinary difficulty have raised an imperishable monument to their rare endowments, to their sleepless zeal, their intrepid boldness, their uncompromising honesty, their sublime devotion. Yet it can not be disguised that nothing graceful appears in their robust and sinewy proportions. They were rough artificers, and they worked with rough tools; preferring a rapid execution of their project by main force to the tardier results of address and dexterity. Much might be urged to extenuate, and even to justify the violence of their procedures. It is not, however, my present business to calculate the merits, or to palliate the errors of the great Scotch reformers; a task which has been ably executed by Dr. M'Crie in his interesting life of John Knox. But I have thought it expedient just to glance at the subject in order that the reader, when carried into scenes in which the jealous attachment of Scotchmen to presbyterianism breaks out, may have his mind constantly awake to the fact, that it was under the presbyterian banner that protestantism triumphed in their land. To this it was owing that, in vulgar estimation, the pure faith of the gospel was so incorporated with the Calvinistic form of church-government, as to be unable to survive a separation. A shrine, framed exactly on that pattern was deemed indispensable for obtaining the inhabitation of the Deity. Accordingly when James I. endeavored, toward the close of the sixteenth century, to impose a moderate kind of episcopacy on Scotland, his enterprise, though conducted as stealthily as possible, and with characteristic craft, was met by a resistance under which it soon expired. With the disastrous attempts of his son to assimilate the kirk to its sister church, by reviving prelacy and introducing a liturgy, every reader of English history is familiar. It were to be wished that the second Charles had learnt from these miscarriages the fatal folly of violently meddling with national prejudices, and of making such headlong inroads into the sanctuary of the conscience, as men of principle and honor will resist at every hazard. So it was, however, that one of the earliest measures of his flagitious reign was an attempt to force back on the good people of Scotland that ecclesiastical discipline which they had so recently and loathingly repudiated.

To this attempt, which would have been unwise in any monarch, and in Charles, was base and unprincipled, we may notice some strong inducements. Foremost among these may be placed the strong disgust that prince had conceived at the covenanters. He had certainly been hard ridden by them when struggling for the throne; and he well knew that, in promoting his restoration they had not been actuated by attachment to his person, but solely by the hope that a monarch who should owe to their sword the recovery of his crown, would prove a pillar of the kirk, a corner-stone of the presbyterian temple. Charles, however, whose memory had a rare facility of shaking off claims upon his gratitude, forgot the services of the party which had lavished its blood in his behalf, but remembered the humiliations by which those services had been purchased. Nor can it be doubted that he had, in this enterprise, a view to the erection of an absolute throne; an hereditary propensity, which would doubtless be augmented by the blow that had recently alighted on his family from the popular arm of the British constitution; and to which a new edge had been given by the display he had witnessed in the French court of the manifold attractions of an irresponsible despotism. He conceived, moreover, that through episcopacy a door might be opened, in process of time, for the admission of popery; a religion which he is reasonably suspected to have adopted, not from a conscientious preference of its doctrines, but from observing that its external frame was excellently adapted to help forward his arbitrary designs. He was further urged on by mercenary intriguers, who pictured Scotland to him with her arms already open to embrace an hierarchical establishment; and when these representations were enforced by the counsels of his ablest ministers, he no longer hesitated to begin an experiment to which he had from the first been prompted by his personal sentiments, although his good understanding had somewhat delayed it.

As far as the accomplishment of the project was concerned, it was apparently sound policy to set about it before presbyterianism

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had recovered from the shock it had received during Cromwell's usurpation, and while the nation's bridal enthusiasm at the union with its desired sovereign was still brisk and mantling. Whether it would have been practicable, as some have imagined, by taking advantage of the suspicions which the presbyterians harbored of the independents, to insinuate by furtive gradations a moderate form of episcopacy, it is not our present business to debate. But had the scheme been ever so wise and excellent, it could hardly have been brought to a fortunate issue by the agents to whose conduct it was intrusted. To have given it a fair chance of success, there should have been employed upon it men of experience, abilities, and virtue; men equally wary and resolute; delicate in managing national prejudices, and strong to arrest or skilful to turn, the stream of epidemical passions; men of popular talent and conciliatory address; and whose moral and religious character would stamp some credit on proceedings, which, how much soever sweetened, must still have left behind a bitter relish.

But instead of such a choice being made, the royal commission was given to Middleton, a man of base origin and baser manners, obstinate, choleric, licentious, and cruel. His coadjutor was Dr. James Sharp, whose memory is still execrated by the presbyterian church, and whose virtues were not of sufficient magnitude, even in the eyes of his own party, for his tragical end to secure him the reputation of a martyr. By his enemies he is branded with every atrocious epithet which malevolence can coin or utter; his political offences are aggravated; his personal character is blackened. That religious bigotry has mangled his corse will be clear to any one, who shall calmly distinguish authentic facts from baseless and improbable allegations. Whoever peruses the narratives of Wodrow and Kirkton, will feel bound to receive their charges against Sharp with no common jealousy, on observing how little careful those historians themselves are to weigh him in an even balance. Bishop Burnet, whose delineations are occasionally tinctured with private dislikes, has left a very ill-favored portrait of his moral character; describing him as devoid of serious religion, an artful sycophant, whose integrity readily truckled to his worldly interests. On the other hand, some favorable representations of him have appeared. It has been averred that in the heavy charge of having betrayed his party he is cruelly belied; inasmuch as he had ceased, before he was made a bishop, to hold any commission from the presbyterian body, and was agent at that time for only one part of the ministers, with whom he had a perfect understanding. Of his liberality also such testimonies have been adduced, as it would be uncandid to disallow. The truth probably is, that Sharp was honest so long as his honesty was unassailed by considerable temptations; but he was not proof against the bait of a mitre. Having neither firmness of principle, nor tenderness of conscience, nor delicacy of honor, he might easily persuade himself that, since no opposition on his part could check the refluent tide of episcopacy, to rise with it to the summit of wealth and dignity would be no illaudible wisdom. For the great affairs intrusted to him by the English government he wanted compass of mind and amenity of temper; and he was still more disqualified for conducting them successfully, by the utter disrepute into which he had fallen with his countrymen. But he was an industrious man, of some versatility of talent and dexterity in business; and these useful qualities, combined with those prime requisites for currying favor with an unprincipled court, a supple conscience, a patient obsequiousness, and a wheedling tongue, attracted the royal notice, and merited for him the primacy of Scotland.

Matters being thus far advanced toward restoring the episcopal regimen, the next business was to find persons qualified for its highest stations. Sydserf, formerly Bishop of Galloway, was the only survivor of that order of dignitaries in Scotland. He was now appointed to Orkney, the least laborious see, and therefore the best adapted to a man almost past his work, but who could not, without receiving a slur on his character, be omitted in the roll of new bishops. After Sharp had secured the primacy by worming himself into the good graces of Lord Clarendon, the appointments to the inferior sees were given very much into his hands. We have Burnet's assertion, and it is corroborated by authenticated facts, that his choice was generally very bad. Yet in company with the names of Fairfowl, Hamilton, and Alexander Burnet, we find the venerable name of Robert Leighton:—

> ——"quale per artem
> Inclusum buxo, aut Oriciâ terebintho,
> Lucet ebur."

Of this nomination, however, the credit is denied to Sharp; and it does seem impossible that he should have approved it, unless he were ignorant, which he hardly could be, of Leighton's character.

The following are the circumstances which led to the exaltation of this extraordinary man to a sphere of stormy greatness, wherein his apostolic virtues gilded the gloom, which it exceeded even their influence to dispel.

During the collegial vacations, Leighton was in the custom of making excursions into England, or across the seas, partly for the benefit of his health, and partly with a view of gaining a clear insight into the state of religious parties and opinions. He was passing homeward through London, after a visit to Bath, when he was first mentioned to the

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king as a desirable person to include among the new bishops, by Lord Aubigny, a nobleman high in favor at court, as well on account of his being a papist, and privy to Charles's apostacy, as because his libertine principles were congenial with those of his graceless sovereign. With this powerful courtier Sir Ellis Leighton, secretary to the Duke of York, was on terms of intimacy; and having himself turned papist from mercenary motives, he now desired with no higher views, the conversion of his brother into a bishop. He was a man of talent, specious and aspiring; and he pretended to a piety which his dissolute life belied. Imagining that a mitre in his family would augment his personal consequence, and thereby conduce to his further aggrandisement, he was at pains to possess the mind of Lord Aubigny with a high conceit of the advantages that would ensue from appointing a man like Robert Leighton to nurse the critical infancy of the episcopal church. Charles, who never wanted penetration, was not hard to be persuaded that the likeliest way to sooth the covenanters, and accredit the meditated innovation, was to invest with the lawn a divine of such superlative merit, so accomplished in learning, and so beloved for his mild and saintlike virtues. This would indeed be to cloak the prelatic wolf in sheep's clothing. Entertaining also an opinion, the proper spawn of a mind steeped in profligacy, that every man's conscience accommodates itself to his interests, he never doubted but Leighton might be wrought upon by his brother to acquiesce in episcopacy being made a stalkinghorse to cover the approaches of popery.

On this he probably counted with the greater assurance in consequence of a current report, that Leighton was not unfriendly to some parts of the pontifical constitutions; a report which seems to have taken its rise from his paying occasional visits to the college at Douay, and to have been countenanced by his celibacy, his ascetic habits, and an admiration for some of the disciples of Jansenius, which he was too highminded and ingenuous to dissemble. It was, indeed, more than insinuated, that he was too liberally affected toward the catholics for a stanch and thorough protestant; and the commendations he bestowed on the works of Thomas à Kempis in his public lectures, did not escape severe animadversions. To attempt a serious confutation of this slander would be to grapple with a shadow. Leighton's writings abound with brief but decisive refutations of those Roman catholic tenets, which it was the essence of the reformation to abjure; and their whole spirit and tenor are diametrically opposite to the self-righteous formalities and unscriptural impositions, which are interwoven with the very substance of that adulterous system. So long as the current of passion bore down, with undistinguishing fury upon whatever was suspected, whether in doctrine or practice, of being cognate to papistry, it was worthy of his benignant and liberal spirit to do what he could toward clearing away prejudices, by which the mind was prevented from seeing clearly to eliminate the faults, without excluding the excellences of the catholic ritual. But when he perceived that a contrary and more dangerous current had set in from the English court, and that nothing less was designed that to restore to the Vatican its ascendency, he then exposed the deformity of the church of Rome in such unsparing terms as nothing but a deep apprehension of the impending evil could have extorted from a man of his forbearance and charity.

Leighton was very averse from his own promotion; and in his nephew's account I find him stating, that his reluctance to acquiesce in it was only overcome by a peremptory order of the court, requiring him to accept it, unless he thought in his conscience that the episcopal office was unlawful. Unable to screen himself behind this opinion, which he was far from entertaining, he surrendered at length to the royal instances, that he might not incur the guilt of contumacy toward the king; or of shrinking from a service, to which a greater Potentate seemed to summon him.

Perhaps this transaction, which has been thought to cast a shade over his constancy and disinterestedness, may appear to the candid and intelligent reasoner, when thoroughly sifted, to exhibit those qualities with singular lustre. Taking in the whole system of his life before and after his consecration, we see him an example of modesty, gravity, and habitual recollection of spirit; a despiser of riches, and show, and figure, and selfish indulgences; an exile in heart from this world of sensible objects; one, whose prime delight it was to dwell in solitary converse with his God, and with the things that are invisible and eternal. To suppose that a man of this make and these habits was carried out of himself by a flush of ambition or vanity, that precluded all due consideration of the manner in which his elevation would affect his credit, his conscience, and his happiness, is to suppose a phenomenon, that could only be made credible by evidence, which in this case is totally wanting. Covetousness could never be laid to his charge without a contempt of historical testimony, too indecent for his keenest enemies to venture on. When, moreover, the soundness of his understanding, and the rigor with which he used to canvass his own conduct and motives, are taken into the account, some presumption that he acted rightly, under all the circumstances of the case, in taking this perilous step, must be admitted to arise from his never repenting of it; neither when he was laboriously sowing in tears, nor when, at the sad conclusion of his episcopal labors, he

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reaped a plentiful harvest of obloquy, disappointment, and sorrow. Not long after his advancement, when some of his former friends upbraided him with his dereliction of his father's principles, contumeliously terming it apostacy, he calmly answered that no man was bound to be of his father's opinions; and whenever he was challenged to vindicate the obnoxious step he had taken, he manifested a frankness and good humor, which could not have subsisted on any terms with an offended conscience.

What then remains but to believe that this transaction was in strict accordance with his magnanimous character? that it was an act of self-immolation at the altar of Christian love; a deliberate surrender of his constant inclinations, and of present ease and quiet, to the exigencies of the church, for whose sake he accounted no affliction too severe, no service too laborious, no sacrifice too costly? Fortunately there is a letter preserved, written at the time he was in suspense about accepting a bishopric, in which he discloses, with touching ingenuity and pathos, the workings of his holy soul. I here insert it as a document of great interest, throwing light on this part of our history, and beautifully illustrating the conflict of his mind, before it was subdued to this great effort of duty.

The letter is to the Rev. Mr. James Aird, minister at Torry.

"My Dear Friend: I have received from you the kindest letter that ever you writ me; and that you may know I take it so, I return you the free and friendly advice, never to judge any man before you hear him, nor any business by one side of it. Were you here to see the other, I am confident your thoughts and mine would be the same. You have both too much knowledge of me, and too much charity to think, that either such little contemptible scraps of honor or riches sought in that part of the world with so much reproach, or any human complacency in the world, will be admitted to decide so grave a question, or that I would sell (to speak no higher) the very sensual pleasure of my retirement for a rattle, far less deliberately do anything that I judge offends God. For the offence of good people in cases indifferent in themselves, but not accounted so by them, whatsoever you do or do not, you shall offend some good people on the one side or other; and for those with you, the great fallacy in this business is, that they have misreckoned themselves in taking my silence and their zeals to have been consent and participation; which, how great a mistake it is, few know better or so well as yourself. And the truth is, I did see approaching an inevitable necessity to strain with them in divers practices, in what station soever remaining in Britain; and to have escaped further off (which hath been in my thoughts) would have been the greatest scandal of all. And what will you say if there be in this thing somewhat of that you mention, and would allow of reconciling the devout on different sides, and of enlarging those good souls you meet with from their little fetters, though possibly with little success? Yet the design is commendable, pardonable at least. However, one comfort I have, that in what is pressed on me there is the least of my own choice, yea on the contrary the strongest aversion that ever I had to anything in all my life: the difficulty in short lies in a necessity of either owning a scruple which I have not, or the rudest disobedience to authority that may be. The truth is, I am yet importuning and struggling for a liberation, and look upward for it: but whatsoever be the issue, I look beyond it, and this weary, weary, wretched life through which the hand I have resigned to I trust will lead me in the path of his own choosing; and so I may please him I am satisfied. I hope if ever we meet you shall find me in the love of solitude and a devout life,

"Your unaltered Brother and Friend,
"R. L.

"When I set pen to paper, I intended not to exceed half a dozen lines, but slid on insensibly thus far: but though I should fill the paper on all sides, still the right view of this business would be necessarily suspended till meeting. Meanwhile hope well of me, and pray for me. This word I will add, that as there has been nothing of my choice in the thing, so I undergo it, if it must be, as a mortification, and that greater than a cell and hair-cloth; and whether any will believe this or no I am not careful."

It is surely no discredit to his sagacity, that he once conceived a hope to which he alludes in his letter, of bringing the episcopalians and presbyterians to coalesce on the basis of reciprocal concession. That hope will not be accounted the less rational for being feeble: but in proportion to its feebleness, if it were not altogether visionary, does the value rise of the sacrifices he made to realize it; for the dignity of its object none will dispute. Had it been possible for human virtue to have prevented the bloody discord, which shortly overcast the spiritual firmament, and rent the Scottish church like an earthquake, Leighton could not have failed. To a temper, in which Burnet never but once saw a ruffle, during a close familiarity of twenty-two years' standing, and under every variety of provocation, and to an address in dealing with perverse and factious spirits, which his adversaries admit while disparaging it with unhandsome epithets, he joined such extreme moderation of sentiment on the points at issue between the two churches, as peculiarly fitted him to stand in the gap, the angel of reconciliation and concord. It is true, indeed, that success has rarely followed attempts to restore compactness to a religious body, after once it has been

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violently divided. For the most part the cure of religious dissensions is unhopeful, in proportion as the ground of them is trivial: because the difficulty of allaying the passions of men corresponds with the degree in which they are wedded to creatures of the imagination. As the contest goes on, the objects of contention gain importance in the eyes of the combatants; and minute differences expand into gulfs which separate salvation from perdition, the rather perhaps for the conscience being honest where the mind is not adequately enlightened. No violent measures, no compendious process, can bring about a cordial union of bodies of men, disunited in matters of conscience. Yet, let time be allowed for factions to disband and irritations to abate; let proper measures be pursued for preventing untoward collisions, and for bringing those who are jealous of each other into contact at points, in which a mutual attraction will be developed: and it may happen that, uniting in affection one to another, they will at length agree together in mind and opinion; or, at least their speculative differences will cease to create baneful and scandalous schisms.

Leighton doubtless hoped that, by a mild and temperate exercise of his episcopal jurisdiction, he should propitiate most of the covenanters, whose hostility to moderate episcopacy he might suppose to be relenting from the avowed desire for it of the synod of Aberdeen, and from the apparent conformity of two thirds of the ministers. The re-establishment of the ancient monarchy, an event so grateful to patriots of both persuasions, he considered a favorable crisis for "causing contentions to cease," and for drowning private grudges and public feuds in an ocean of Christian love and universal prosperity. He might hope, moreover, that by his personal influence with the king, to whom his brother's situation at court would facilitate his access, he should be able to keep in check the violent partisans of prelacy, and to curb that headlong precipitance of innovation, of which some portentous symptoms had already appeared in the royal councils. In the latter objects he did not entirely fail: for he effectually shielded the nonconformists in his own diocess from molestation; and more than once, as we shall see hereafter, he converted the king to moderate measures by his faithful and fearless representations. His attempts to soften the prejudices of his own countrymen, and to effect a conjunction of the two churches did, it is true, miscarry. But it will appear in the sequel of this history, that the failure does not lie with the bishop, who exhibited throughout that arduous transaction an illustrious specimen of Christian diplomacy, and whose character came forth from it, as pure gold seven times tried in the furnace.

There is one particular of Leighton's conduct in this perplexing business, which is open to just exception. I allude to his receiving the orders, first of deacon, and then of priest, from the English bishops, previously to his consecration. Sheldon, bishop of London, insisted on Sharp and Leighton being re-ordained, on the plea that their presbyterian ordination was void from the beginning, it having been conferred by a church actually in a state of schism, which vitiated all its acts of administration. Leighton denied the soundness of this objection to the validity of his ministry. Yet being little scrupulous, too little indeed, about the circumstantials of ecclesiastical polity, he yielded to Sheldon's demand with a readiness, which the repugnance evinced to it by Sharp made the more observable. The view he took of the ceremony imposed upon them was, "the re-ordaining a priest ordained in another church imported no more, but that they received him into orders according to their own rules; and did not infer the annulling the orders he had formerly received." Had the English bishops concurred in this explanation, Leighton would have stood on solid ground in submitting to a new ordination. But instead of concurring in it, their avowed meaning was to bestow that upon him, of which in their judgment he was hitherto destitute—a regular consecration to the ministry of the gospel; and in this meaning Leighton did to outward appearance acquiesce. His private construction of the act, to which he submitted, could not change his public aspect and character. It seemed levelled at the foundations of presbytery, by impeaching the legitimacy of all presbyterian ministers, who had received holy orders after episcopacy was legally resettled in Scotland by King James; and of course it exasperated the clergy, who were in that predicament, and also the laity, who thought the honor and interest of their church were compromised by Leighton's concession.

It was the duty of a faithful historian to avow, that Leighton did not not, in this instance, sufficiently consider the ill impression his compliance would produce on mankind, and how much it might weaken his influence, by bringing him nearer in public estimation, than had been supposed possible, to the level of mere worldly calculators. Yet assuredly the real spring of his conduct in this affair was a high-toned spirituality, which made him overlook the importance attached by vulgar opinion to the outside frame and fashion of religion. For on any point which seemed to touch the substance of Christian piety, he was exquisitely sensible. Hence his disgust at the feasting and jollity, with which the consecration of the new bishops was celebrated. It grieved this excellent man, to see anything of sensual levity mixed up with the solemn business to which they were set apart; and the absence of that seriousness and spirit of prayer, which be-



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came the commencement of such an undertaking as the new modelling of a church, oppressed his mind with gloomy presages. These were increased, when he found Archbishop Sharp unprepared with any plan for healing the wounds of the church, for purging out its corruptions, for rectifying its disorders, and for kindling in it a livelier flame of true piety. On these great objects Leighton was anxious to begin without delay; and already he had conceived a process for the union of parties in Scotland, and for reforming the public services of religion, and reducing them to a method more orderly and better adapted to general edification. But in these Christian projects he found no auxiliaries. With Sharp, the establishment of an hierarchy, with himself at the head, appears to have been the ultimate object; and he was neither able to understand the spirit, nor disposed to forward the schemes of Leighton, of whose influence with Lauderdale he had begun to conceive a jealousy, and to whose pious disinterestedness the worldliness of his colleagues stood in disgraceful contrast. Leighton's sad forebodings were not a little confirmed by a close observation of Sharp's real character, and by the clearer development, that was daily taking place, of the principles which actuated the episcopalian leaders. In the supercilious recklessness of the infant hierarchy he descried the sure omen of its downfall; and he remarked to Burnet that, "in the whole progress of that affair, there appeared such cross characters of an angry Providence, that how fully soever he was satisfied in his own mind as to episcopacy itself, yet it seemed that God was against them, and that they were not like to be the men that should build up his church, so that the struggling about it seemed to him like a fighting against God."

On the 12th of December, 1661, four of the persons fixed upon to commence the episcopal dynasty of Scotland received consecration in London. Leighton being appointed, at his special request, to the inconsiderable see of Dunblane, in Perthshire. Early in the following year, the new bishops proceeded in one coach to Edinburgh. Between Leighton and his colleagues, however, there was such a want of sympathy, as made it very irksome to him to journey in their company; and having learned that it was their intention to make a grand entry into Edinburgh, he quitteth them at Morpeth, and arrived some days before the rest of the party. Burnet describes himself to have been a downcast spectator of the pomp and parade with which the other three bishops were escorted into the Scottish metropolis; and the spirit of wise and pious men was abashed, when they contrasted this ostentatious pageantry with the example of that true Bishop of souls, who made his last solemn entrance into Jerusalem, riding upon an ass and weeping, as if unable to endure the splendor of a triumph which prophecy forbade him to decline, unless it were shaded with a cloud of humility and sadness.

The first measures taken by Sharp and his coadjutors, if the pliable agents of his cupidity deserve to be so named, bore fatal marks of that perverse genius by which they were conceived. Instead of endeavoring to break in the restiff spirit of presbyterianism by gentle usage and gradual loading, with a desperate hand he at once buckled on the saddle, and laid on the whole weight of the episcopal colossus. In pursuance of this policy it was enacted, even before the bishops left London, that presbyteries and judicatories should be abolished. This imprudent decree was followed up by an act, asserting the king's ecclesiastical supremacy, reinstating the bishops in their parliamentary privileges and civil dignities, and conferring on them an exclusive presidency in church meetings, the power of ordination and of censure, with whatever else appertains to the administration and jurisdiction of the church. It was added, indeed, that in the exercise of their functions they were to advise with certain loyal and prudent clergymen. Yet, as their assessors were to be selected by themselves, and were not empowered collectively to enforce an opinion contrary to their diocesan's, it is clear that any check they could maintain on the despotism of the bench would be of small account. All real authority was lodged with the bishop; and his clerical advisers were mere ciphers, to whom was allotted the unenviable privilege of sharing with their principal the odium of arbitrary proceedings, which they were not competent either to prevent or modify.

Such was the present scheme of episcopacy, widely different from that of the year 1612, when the bishops affected nothing more than to be settled presidents, to have a negative voice in all questions relating to ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and some superior authority in ordination. This hasty attempt to force on a people, to whom presbytery was dear "as a wife of youth," the highest kind of prelacy, was certainly to pour new wine into old bottles. It could not but produce a disastrous explosion. But nothing could stay the precipitance of that misguided man, who seems to have expected, in the pride of his new-blown grandeur, that difficulties would vanish at his touch. He did not, it is allowed, ever carry his episcopal powers to the full extent permitted by this act of parliament. Still the passing of such an act furnished those who refused the new model with a plausible justification; and exhibited the capital solecism in policy, of making a legislative invasion of the popular rights and feelings more considerable in the terms of the enactment than it was really meant to be in the execution.

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In his fixed aversion to worldly honors, Leighton besought his friends not to give him the appellation of Lord, and was uneasy at ever being addressed by that title. By this singularity he gave umbrage to his colleagues, and laid himself open to the charge of an affectation, proceeding from narrow-minded squeamishness, if not from a refinement of vanity: or, indeed, this solicitude to divest his office of its usual dignities might be ill-naturedly ascribed to his not being thoroughly satisfied with the function itself, and seeking to compound with his conscience by a sacrifice of external distinction.

Shortly after their arrival in Edinburgh, the bishops were formally invited to take their seats in parliament; not that any invitation was requisite to authorize their attendance, but it was deemed a proper token of respect. By all, except the Bishop of Dunblane, the call was obeyed. He resolved from the beginning never to mix in parliament, unless some matter affecting the interests of religion were in agitation; and to this resolution he steadily adhered.

His first appearance in parliament was on the question respecting the oath of supremacy. This oath was so worded as to carry on the face of it no demand, beyond what the presbyterians were willing to admit, namely, that the king should be recognised for the civil head of the church as well as of the state. Yet there was something in the phraseology so equivocal as to warrant a suspicion, that it was artfully contrived for a handle by which the sovereign might interfere, at pleasure, and with absolute authority, in the internal regulation of the church. In England such explanations were given, when the oath was tendered, as brought it within the compass of a presbyterian conscience. But when it was required by the Earl of Cassilis, and by other stout covenanters in the parliament of Scotland, that the necessary qualification for reconciling its provisions to their scruples should be inserted into the body of the act, or, at least, be subjoined to their subscriptions, the High Commissioner would not listen to the demand. Leighton now stepped forward, the fearless champion, the eloquent advocate of moderation and charity. He maintained that trammeling men's consciences with so many rigorous oaths could only produce laxity of moral principle, or unchristian bigotry and party feeling. With respect to the oath itself, he would not dissemble his opinion that it was susceptible of a bad sense; and, therefore, the tenderness of conscience, which refused to take it without guarding against an evil construction, ought not to be derided. The English papists had obtained this indulgence; and it was strange indeed if protestants were to be more hardly dealt by. When, in reply to this spirited remonstrance, it was contended by Sharp, that the complaining party, in the days of its ascendency, had been little tender of the consciences of those who revolted at the Solemn League and Covenant, Leighton exclaimed at the unworthiness of retaliating by measures which had been so justly reprobated; and he emphatically pointed out the nobler course of heaping coals upon the heads of adversaries, by the contrast of episcopal mildness with presbyterian severity. For them to practise, for the base purpose of quitting scores, the same rigor against which they had vehemently protested when themselves were the victims of it, would be a foul blot on their Christian character, and would justify the sarcasm, that *the world goes mad by turns.* However solid these arguments were, they made no impression on the Earl of Middleton and his creatures, whose project it was to have the oath of that ambiguous cast, which should deter the stiffer covenanters from taking it, who would thereby become liable to the penalties of disloyalty. One can not without pain admit an opinion that bears so hard upon the probity and humanity of the royal party. Yet this is not a solitary instance of an oath being artfully shaped to entrap persons, whom state policy has marked for its victims. Leighton used to observe, with some reference no doubt to this transaction, that a consolidation of the episcopal and presbyterian platforms, had it been judiciously and sincerely attempted at the outset, might have been accomplished; but there were some evil spirits at work, "whose device it was plainly again to scatter us: and the terms of comprehension were made so strait, in order to keep men out." It was a transaction, however, that gave an illustrious prominence to his own extraordinary virtues, to his enlightened charity, his inexorable honesty, and his generous courage.

Leighton thought with St. Augustin, that a bishopric is not intended for pastime and amusement: "*Episcopatus non est artificium transigendæ vitæ.*" He therefore resided constantly on his see, and his holy ministrations watered the places about him with a blessing. Not content to repose in lazy state, he regarded himself as a shepherd of souls, and went about from parish to parish catechising and preaching. But his primary aim was to heal the fountains; for he justly considered that if ministers were to become sound in doctrine, exemplary in personal conduct, and sedulous in pastoral duties, the fruits of their spirituality and zeal would quickly appear in the amended state of their parishes. It would be difficult to do justice to the sense he entertained of the immense responsibility of Christian ministers. For himself, as his practice bears witness, he always desired the smallest cure; partly from native humility, and partly from an apprehension, so lively as to be almost terrible, of the account which must be given in by spiritual overseers at the great tribunal. Often would he commiserate

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those of the London clergy the extent of whose cures made it impracticable to pay each individual of their flock the attention his soul required. "Theirs," he observed, "is rightly called *cura animarum*;" a concern, he seems to have meant, full of anxiety and peril. "Were I again," he said in his last retirement, "to be a parish minister, I must follow sinners to their houses, and even to their alehouses." As one of the faults imputed to the episcopal clergy was unskilfulness in preaching, he was solicitous to remove from his own diocess all color for this allegation. This he knew could never be effected until the pulpits were filled by holy men. "It is vain," he would say, "for any one to speak of divine things, without something of divine affections. An ungodly clergyman must feel uneasy when preaching godliness, and will hardly preach it persuasively. He has not been able to prevail on himself to be holy, and no marvel if he fail of prevailing on others. In truth, he is in great danger of being hardened against religion by the frequent inculcation of it, if it fail of melting him."

The following extract from a letter, in which he offers a living to one of his clergy, affords a beautiful specimen of Christian politeness, at the same time that it lets us into the bishop's sense of the temper and affection with which a charge of souls should be undertaken:—

"Sir: There is one place indeed in my precinct now vacant, and yet undisposed of, by the voluntary removal of the young man who was in it to a better benefice; and this is likewise in my hand, but it is of so wretchedly mean provision, that I am ashamed to name it, little I think above five hundred marks [less than 30*l.* sterling] by year. If the many instances of that kind you have read have made you in love with *voluntary poverty*, there you may have it; but wheresoever you are, or shall be, for the little rest of your time, I hope you are, and still will be, daily advancing in that blest poverty of spirit that is the only true height and greatness of spirit in all the world, entitling to a crown, 'for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Oh, what are the scraps that the great ones of this world are scrambling for compared with that pretension! I pray you, as you find an opportunity, though possibly little or no inclination to it, yet bestow one line or two upon

"Your poor friend and servant, "R. L."

The following letter to the heritors* of the parish of Stratton, places in a clear light the upright yet sagacious policy by which Leighton managed to fill the vacant benefices with pious men, and to conciliate the goodwill of the parishioners to their new pastors.

"Worthy Gentlemen and Friends: Being informed that it is my duty to present a person, fit for the charge of the ministry now vacant with you, I have thought of one whose integrity and piety I am so fully persuaded of, that I dare confidently recommend him to you, as one who, if the hand of God do bind that work upon him among you, is likely through the blessing of the same hand, to be very serviceable to the building up of your souls heavenward; but is as far from suffering himself to be obtruded, as I am from obtruding any upon you; so that unless you invite him to preach, and after hearing him, declare your consent and desire toward his embracing of the call, you may be secure from the trouble of hearing any further concerning him, either from himself or me; and if you please to let me know your mind, your reasonable satisfaction shall be to my utmost power endeavored by

"Your affectionate friend
"And humble servant,
"R. Leighton."

The charges of this venerable prelate to the clergy of the diocesan synod of Dunblane are valuable and interesting records, as well on account of the sterling good sense and piety with which they abound, as of the light they shed on his professional character and deportment. From the instructions, which he found it necessary to issue in the year of his inauguration, it may be inferred that the district over which he presided had not made much proficiency in godliness under presbyterian pedagogy. He prescribed such rules of worship and discipline as were indicated by the disorders of the existing system, and were adapted to correct the flagrant immoralities of the time and place. Officiating ministers were directed to read portions of the Old and New Testaments, not after the irreverent manner hitherto in vogue, of making it a bywork while the congregation was assembling, but as an integral and important part of the service. It was the bishop's wish, that the Lord's prayer, the Apostles' creed, and the doxology, should be restored to more frequent use; that a weekly day should be appointed for catechising; and that an easy compendium of Christian doctrine should be agreed upon by his clergy, to be made the basis of catechetical instructions to the young and the ignorant. Probably the short catechism which is among his printed works, was composed for this purpose. The sermons of that period generally ran in a high strain of controversy. Against this the bishop set his face; and he labored to bring into the place of subtle and passionate disputations, a modest and sober style of preaching, that should be level to the capacities and calculated to mend the morals of the vulgar. On the ignorance and viciousness of the people in general he touches sorrowfully; and he warns his clergy against slack-

* The heritors of a parish are the owners of the real property within it.

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ness and timidity in reproving the prevalent sins of their respective parishes. Large portions of holy scripture were preferred by him as subjects for sermons, to single texts; for he thought they offered more scope for pithy practical remark, and were better calculated to lay hold on the attention of the auditory.

Though friendly to a grave and masculine eloquence of which he was himself no common master, yet his chief desire was, that discourses from the pulpit should be simple and perspicuous. After hearing a plain and homely sermon he expressed the highest satisfaction; "For the good man," said he, in reference to the preacher, "seems in earnest to catch souls." The measure of speech, he remarked, and it is a remark well worthy of being preserved, ought to be the character of the audience, which is made up for the most part of illiterate persons.

Any deliberate opinion of this great man must deserve respect, even when it may not command acquiescence. It would, therefore, be wrong to omit mentioning, that he disliked the practice of reading sermons, a practice scarcely known across the seas; being of opinion that it detracted much from the weight and authority of preaching. "I know [he said] that weakness of the memory is pleaded in excuse for this custom; but better minds would make better memories. Such an excuse is unworthy of a man, and much more of a father, who may want vent indeed in addressing his children, but ought never to want matter. Like Elihu, he should be refreshed by speaking."

Although disposed to lenity, he was not regardless of discipline. Gross offences committed in his diocess were to be branded with church censures; and the restoration of offenders to the communion of the church was to be delayed till indubious symptoms of repentance had shown themselves.

It was among his pious plans to bring about a more frequent celebration of the Lord's supper, which, in those days, was not in every place so much as an annual ceremony; and he wished the people to be carefully instructed in the spiritual import of this holy rite, and to be frequently exhorted to maintain a constant fitness for it by uniform blamelessness of conversation. He also made it incumbent on his clergy to promote the practice of family worship, and to exercise a watchful superintendence over their flocks, bearing the spiritual burdens of every member, and dealing out to each, as his case might require, instruction, or counsel, or reproof, or consolation.

It has already been stated how careful he was to put his clergy in remembrance that no substantial good could be expected from their ministrations, unless they were themselves remarkable for sanctity of heart and life; men of prayer, of study, and meditation; of "great contempt of this present world, and inflamed affections toward heaven;" whose pure and peaceable demeanor, full of mercy and good fruits, should stamp them for the sons of God and servants of the meek and lowly Jesus. Moreover he considered a singular modesty and gravity, even in externals, such as their apparel and the adjustment of their hair, to be highly becoming in ministers, whose profession it was to give themselves wholly to the care of immortal souls.

Having these things much at heart, he gave in a paper at the synod of 1667, in which, after a most conciliatory introduction, and blaming himself for having, through averseness to lord it over Christ's heritage, been more backward to advise them than perhaps his situation demanded, he proceeds to urge the importance of adding life and efficacy to those "privy trials," in which the presbyters used to examine each other for mutual correction and edification. This process, he is satified, might be made exceedingly salutary to those who were declining in zeal and diligence, were entangled in doctrinal errors, or were in any way swerving from the path of ministerial duty; provided they were so conducted as to constrain a man to serious reflection upon himself; and with a view to their being rendered thus useful, he lays down some admirable rules, which are included in the body of his works.

Let it here be noticed how remote this holy man is from an imperious and domineering exercise of his authority. Instead of exacting submission from his clergy by peremptoriness and menaces, he industriously waives the superior character of a bishop, and bespeaks their obedience by urbanity and gentleness. It is asserted by Wodrow and others, that the clergy of Dunblane were notoriously ignorant and disorderly. I have met with nothing to corroborate this heavy charge; and from their diocesan's pastoral letters and addresses it is rather to be inferred that their defects have been overstated, or else were greatly corrected during his administration. He seems to have judged it expedient to raise them as nearly to a level with himself, as the indispensable dignity of episcopal government would allow; and whatever alterations he thought necessary were proposed in the shape of friendly suggestion, and not of overbearing dictation. The only priority he sought was in labors; the only ascendency he coveted was in self-denial and holiness; and in these respects he had few competitors for pre-eminence.

Proceeding steadily upon these principles, and exerting all his influence to impart to others the same fervency of spirit, he drew upon himself the eyes of all Scotland, which gazed with amazement at his bright and singular virtues, as at a star of unrivalled brilliance newly added to the sky. Even the presbyterians were softened by his Christian urbanity and condescension, and were constrained to admit that on him had descended

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a double portion of the apostolic spirit. Had his colleagues in office been kin to him in temper, it is not extravagant to believe that the attempt to restore episcopacy would have had a more prosperous issue.

As there is no record of Leighton having taken a prominent part in the settlement of the church, during the earlier part of his episcopacy, we may assume that he confined himself to private advice and expostulation; hoping that, when the happy results of his own pacific proceedings should be visible, the other bishops would be induced to follow in his track. But it soon became apparent, that the plans in progress for extirpating the presbyterian discipline were diametrically opposite to the dictates of wisdom and mercy. I find him expressing himself, in allusion no doubt to the leading men of this period, with a poignant recollection of the selfish craft by which they were characterized. Seeing them destitute of Christian simplicity and singleness of purpose, he lost all heart about the issue of their measures; and designated them, in spiritual language, empty vines bringing forth fruit unto themselves. "I have met with many cunning plotters," he would say, "but with few truly honest and skilful undertakers. Many have I seen who were wise and great as to this world, but of such as are willing to be weak that others may be strong, and whose only aim it is to promote the prosperity of Zion, have I not found one in ten thousand."

Having made these afflicting discoveries, and finding all his efforts to put things in a better train quite ineffectual, Leighton thought he should be justified in laying down the charge, which he had taken up, not as a dignity, but as a cross and burden. He resolved, however, to go up to London in the first instance, and to lay before the royal eye, which had hitherto been deluded with fallacious representations, a faithful picture of the distempered and convulsed state of Scotland. Having obtained an interview with Charles, he declared that the severities practised upon objectors to the new establishment were such as his conscience could not justify, even for the sake of planting Christianity in a heathen land; and much less could he agree to them for an end so comparatively insignificant, as that of substituting one form of ecclesiastical government for another. He therefore besought permission to resign his bishopric, lest by retaining it he should seem to be a party to violences, at which his principles and feelings revolted. His majesty professed disapprobation of the manner in which the affairs of the church were administered by Sharp, and seemed touched by the pathetic arguments of the virtuous advocate of toleration. He pledged himself to stop that application of the secular sword, against which Leighton protested; and he actually annulled the ecclesiastical commission, which pretended to goad dissenters into conformity by fines and jails and corporal punishments. But he would not hear of Leighton's vacating his see; and the bishop consented at length to retain it, as he could not be unaware that, by persisting in his purpose of retirement, he would throw away every chance of holding the king to those engagements, into which he had just been impelled for the prosperity of the church.

Leighton had so fully made up his mind to withdraw at this time from his station, that he had bidden a solemn farewell to his clergy before his departure for London. After winding up the regular business of the synod in October, 1665, he informed them that there was a matter which, though of little concern to them and the church, he still thought it his duty to notify to them. He then announced his attention of retiring; and the reasons he assigned for it were, the sense he entertained of his own unworthiness to sustain so high an office, and his weariness of those contentions, which had clothed the household of God in mourning, and seemed to be rather increasing than abating. "For myself, brethren, I have to thank you for the undeserved respect and kindness which I have all along experienced at your hands. Let me entreat your good construction of the poor endeavors I have used to serve you, and to assist you in promoting the work of the ministry and th great designs of the gospel. If in anything, whether by word or deed, I have given yo offence, or unnecessarily pained a single individual among you, I do earnestly and humbly crave forgiveness. My last advice to you is, that you continue in the study of peace and holiness, and grow and abound in love to your great Lord and Master, and to the souls for which he died. Finally, brethren, farewell; be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of peace and love shall be with you. Amen."

About two years afterward, the growing calamities of the church called for prompt and vigorous remedies. It was decreed by the council, that all incumbents should obtain presentation from the patrons and episcopal institution, or forthwith resign their benefices. This intemperate act, of which the credit is given to Bishop Fairfowl, occasioned all at once a great number of vacancies, which fit and able men were not at hand to supply. Had the most considerable of the nonconformist ministers been gradually and quietly superseded, an explosion of popular wrath might have been avoided. But when, in addition to the grievance of being deprived of their own ministers, the congregations were required to receive, in the room of these revered pastors, men whose morals were not always clear of reproach, and who were mostly ill-provided with learning and piety for a ministerial charge

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their disgust at prelatical innovations settled into a ferocious antipathy to the new constitution of the church.

It was the misfortune of these times, moreover, that owing to the king's dislike of business, and his immoral levity, the government took its tone from the views or whims of the principal minister of the reigning favorite for the time being; and public measures were in perpetual mutation. There was no steady hand, endued with competent force and authority to prevent the most baneful fluctuations of the body politic. Not that the unsteadiness of the helm should be attributed to the monarch's capriciousness or supineness alone. It proceeded, in part, from the difficulty he found in carrying on together his two favorite objects, of pulling down presbyterianism, and building up popery: it being hard to inflict a blow upon the former without wounding the latter; or to enact laws favorable to the catholic dissenter, the benefit of which should not extend to the presbyterian. Nothing, however, could be more adverse to the settlement of Scotch affairs, than such a vacillating administration. At times, the bishops were armed with almost unlimited powers for the subversion of presbytery: but before sufficient space had been allowed for the success of a resolute despotism, if despotic measures could have succeeded, their powers were abridged; a clog was put on their career of intolerance; and the other party, from being discouraged and enfeebled, was roused to fresh hope and resistance. Then, a sudden recourse to arbitrary measures would cut short the experiment of conciliation; or it would be tried on too limited and partial a scale to answer any other purpose, than that of making the subsequent severities, or those which were all the while going forward in other districts, to be the more conspicuous and galling.

Resuming the thread of our narration, we are to relate the proceedings of the Bishop of Dunblane, in the year 1607, in conjunction with Lord Tweedale, who possessed, according to Burnet's estimate, true benevolence, with much political talent and information, but was over-cautious and timid, and too prone to side with any government. This nobleman, who fortunately had the chief confidence of Lauderdale, viewed with an aching heart the disorders of his country, and vigorously applied himself to heal them before they should be grown incurable. He saw at once that Leighton was the proper man to be at the head of the ecclesiastical administration;* and indeed it was high time for some capable man to be fixed in that station, since, as matters now went on, the business of the church constituted more than two thirds of the whole business of the state. Accordingly he spared no pains to engage Leighton's co-operation; and in order to that co-operation being made more effectual, he let slip no opportunity of impressing the king with an opinion of his superlative merits, and of his competence to the chief direction of ecclesiastical affairs. Had he succeeded in this project, it was his hope to winnow the church, by degrees, of those vain and worthless characters with which it was infested; and to bring in a set of men who would adorn their profession, and recommend the episcopal frame by undeniable piety and talent. How far Leighton fell in with this excellent design, as it concerned his own advancement, is not related; but he consented to undertake another fatiguing journey to London, and again to implore the redress of those grievances, under which the church was wasting away. On this second visit, he had two audiences of Charles, in which he fulfilled the duty of a faithful ambassador. He exposed without disguise the distempered state of the realm, and showed how those diseases, which might have yielded to gentle and seasonable remedies, had been exasperated by harsh and empirical treatment. His first object was to awaken the king to the necessity of adopting healing measures without delay, as the only means

* The following extract from the history of Scotland by Sir George Mackenzie, who was a leading character in these times, and lord advocate, will be appropriate in this part of our narrative:—

"The debates and transactions which fell in at this time discovered very much to our statesmen, how far each of the present clergy stood affected to the supremacy of the civil magistrates in church affairs, and in what they approved or disapproved the late indulgence; for the advice of many churchmen, not properly interested, was asked at this time, rather to know their inclination, than for information: and it was easily found, that the Bishop of Dunblane was the most proper and fit person to serve the state in the church, according to the present platform of government now resolved upon: for he was in much esteem for his piety and moderation, among the people, as to which the presbyterians themselves could neither reproach nor equal him; albeit they hated him most of all his fraternity, in respect he drew many into a kindness for episcopacy, by his exemplary life, rather than debates. His great principle was, that devotion was the great affair about which churchmen should employ themselves; and that the gaining of souls, and not the external government, was their proper task: nor did he esteem it fit, and scarce lawful to churchmen, to sit in councils and judicatories, these being diversions from the main. And albeit his judgment did lead him to believe the church of England the best model of all others, both for doctrine and discipline, yet did he easily conform with the practice of the Christians among whom he lived, and therefore lived peaceably under presbytery, till it was abolished: and when he undertook to be bishop himself, he opposed all violent courses, whereby men were forced to comply with the present worship, beyond their persuasions; and he granted a latitude and indulgence to those of his own diocess, before the king had allowed any by his letter. This made the world believe, that he was the author to his majesty of that public indulgence; and the statesmen who were unwilling to be authors of an innovation, which some there thought might prove dangerous, were well satisfied to have it so believed: but, however, these principles rendered him a fit instrument in their present undertakings."—Page 161.

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of averting a fatal crisis. Then, without hazarding a premature exposure of the expedients which were dictated by the present exigency, he humbly advised that an attempt should be made, by some act of comprehension, to draw the more temperate of the presbyterian party within the pale of the establishment; and he advertised his majesty of the danger he would run of losing episcopacy altogether, by refusing to surrender any of its appendages. The ship would sail less gallantly, it was true, with her topmasts cut away; but that was her only chance of outriding the tempest.

The king professed to fall in with the moderate measures recommended by Lord Tweedale and Leighton. But the passions of the covenanters had been allowed to effervesce so long, and they were so incensed by the king's breach of faith, and by the oppressiveness of the High Commission, that it was hardly to be expected that any ministerial filters, how artfully soever compounded, would avail to charm back their affections. Nor were the presbyterian chieftains remiss or unskilful in fomenting the popular discontent. A breath from them would have extinguished the smoking firebrand; but that breath was applied to fan it into a flame. Young and fiery preachers ranged up and down the country, sounding the tocsin of the covenant, and warning the people against the deadly plague of the prelatic leprosy. The cause of presbyterianism against episcopacy was the battle of Jehovah with Baal. It was a holy war for the rescue of the ark of the covenant from the hands of uncircumcised Philistines: and it was set forth under such aspects, as should respectively attract both the bad and the good;—miscreants, who loved tumult, and throve by the disorders of the commonwealth, along with men of a tender conscience or a resolute piety. Accordingly, these fanatical incendiaries had great success. The rabble were lashed into madness by having their wrongs and their duties perpetually rung in their ears; and being countenanced, it is to be feared, by men above the rabble in birth and education, but not in moderation and virtue, they scrupled at nothing that might evince their hatred to the episcopal incumbents, and compel them to withdraw. To this end, affronts and indignities were heaped upon their heads: they could not pass to and from church, in the discharge of their clerical duties, without encountering volleys of reproaches and curses, or even missiles more dangerous to their persons. Their houses were no longer a sanctuary; their property was plundered, and their lives were attempted. Worn out by this series of persecutions, and despairing of a change for the better, many of these unhappy curates abandoned their parishes, a few with some, but most without any, pecuniary compensation.

While the flimsy fabric of episcopacy was rocking in this tempest, the spirit of infatuation had fallen on all the bishops except Leighton: and his oracular voice, though lifted up boldly, was drowned in the clamor for pushing forward the new system without pause or relaxation. He persisted, however, in those pacific measures, which the king had engaged to sanction. He tried to persuade the leading statesmen to second them with their authority; and he suggested the expediency of repealing those absurd laws, which rated the episcopal authority far higher than any of the bishops dared to carry into practice. Taking notice of the extraordinary concessions made by the African Church to the Donatists, who were to the full as extravagant as the people of his own day, he was an advocate for going a great way toward meeting their demands, and for so lengthening the cords and stretching out the curtains, of the episcopal frame, as to take in all the covenanters who were not implacable recusants. Although the concessions, to which he was prepared to proceed, went near to vacate the episcopal office, yet he thought them justified by the improbability of their permanence; for he counted that when the present race of untameable zealots was laid in the grave, and an era of peace had allowed scope for a revival of good sense and charity, there would be a readiness on the part of the people to reinvest the bishop with such prerogatives as he had been unreasonably compelled to sacrifice at the shrine of religious concord.

The articles proposed by Leighton for the basis of an accommodation, are reported by Burnet in nearly the following words:—

1. That the church should be governed by the bishops and their clergy, mixing together in the church judicatories, in which the bishop should act only as a president, and be determined by the majority of his presbyters, both in matters of jurisdiction and ordination.

2. That the presbyters should be allowed, when they first sat down in their judicatories, to declare that their sitting under a bishop was submitted to by them for peace sake; with a reservation of their opinion with relation to any such presidency; and that no negative vote should be claimed by the bishop.

3. That bishops should go to the churches, in which such as were candidates for ordination were to serve, and hear and discuss any exceptions that were made to them, and ordain them with the concurrence of the presbytery.

4. That such as were to be ordained should have leave to declare their opinion, if they held that the bishop was only the head of the presbyters.

5. That provincial synods should sit in course every third year, or oftener if the king summoned them; in which complaints of the bishops should be received, and they should be censured according to their deserts.

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It was not to be expected that such a scheme would go down smoothly with the patrons of the new system. There was an outcry against it as a measure subversive of episcopacy, which it certainly despoiled of some capital dignities and powers. Against this Leighton urged, that it was better to depress episcopacy below the scriptural model, than to suffer the church to continue a prey to those factions, which had already carried a sword into its bowels. He further essayed to sooth the indignant prelatists, by showing how probable it was that the locks, of which episcopacy was unhandsomely shorn, would rapidly grow again; and that, like a moulted eagle, it would ere long, soar aloft with renovated strength and richer plumage.

As there is no reason, on the one hand, to suspect the bishop of Dunblane of having held out hopes, to propitiate the high episcopalians, which he thought unlikely to be verified, so on the other hand, there is not the slightest ground for charging him with duplicity, because, while proposing an excessive abasement of the episcopal office, he anticipated its partial redintegration. Had he artfully shaped the proposed constitution, so as to leave a handle by which the bishops might recover their abdicated authority; or had he purposely made the machinery liable to accidents and embarassments, which it would need an augmentation of the episcopal influence to remedy, he would justly have incurred the reproach of double dealing. But it is obvious that he studied, with the greatest good faith, to accommodate his plan to the presbyterian taste as nearly as the government with which he acted would endure. No doubt he foresaw the likelihood of the presbyterian ministers themselves, as soon as the fever of faction and bigotry should be allayed, unclosing their eyes to the inconvenience of so immoderately retrenching the powers of their chief functionary. Such foresight is creditable to his penetration, without disparagement to his integrity. In order to form an adequate estimate of this great bishop's merits, it is necessary to reflect upon the extraordinary difficulties with which he had to contend. He was mediating between two fierce parties, who agreed in nothing but unkind suspicions of himself; and it was hardly within the compass of human skill and wisdom, in that squally season, to steer so exactly through a narrow and intricate channel, as to escape the rocks on one side without striking upon those on the other. It was his difficult task to keep on terms with the impatient arrogance of the episcopal party, at the same time that he accommodated himself to the crabbed humors and contracted genius of the nonconformists. He had at once to propitiate jealous adversaries, and to obviate the misconduct of lukewarm or dishonest confederates. One while he was thwarted by the king's despotic jealousies, and again he was traversed by the selfish wiliness of Lauderdale. That he should have done so much, and endured so bravely, must therefore be ascribed to a zeal, a diligence, a constancy, a wisdom, an unquenchable benevolence, and a valorous self-devotion, before which everything bent but the inflexible sinews of relentless bigotry.

It was the Earl of Kirkadine's advice, that no treaty should be attempted with the presbyterians; but that whatever concessions it might be thought expedient to make, should pass into laws: and he hoped that, when they saw nothing further was to be expected from holding out, they would accede to the new arrangements. In this opinion Leighton fully concurred; but Lord Lauderdale refused his assent, with a sinister purpose, it was shrewdly suspected, of frustrating the attempt at accommodation. It was then resolved to try whether anything could be effected by private negotiation. With this view Burnet was sent to Hutchinson,* who was connected with him by marriage, and was esteemed the most learned man of that party, to sound his sentiments on the comprehension, but not to propose it officially. The wary minister took care, however, not to commit himself, observing that he was but one of many, and his opinion that of a simple individual. All he would say was, that the project was not in his eyes very promising; but he reserved his sentence on the particular concessions proposed, until they should be ratified by competent authority.

Shortly after this abortive negotiation, the experiment was tried of granting some of the vacant churches to the most moderate of the presbyterian ministers. The adoption of this measure was accelerated, if not occasioned, by a letter of Burnet to Lord Tweedale, in which he strongly advised it; and being known to cherish an almost filial reverence for Leighton, it was naturally presumed that he was the organ of the bishop's sentiments. The fact is, however, that the letter in question had not been imparted to Leighton; nor would it, there is reason to think, have obtained his concurrence.

This measure, which was contrary to the law that had vested the right of parochial institution in the bishops, was productive of little or no advantage. The indulged ministers could not, in common decency, launch out against the episcopal platform; and they were driven to preach more on Christian doctrine and practice than suited the temper of the times. Hence they fell under a reproach with their several congregations, which prevented their usefulness; and what with the contemptuous invectives of the non-indulged ministers on the one hand, and the unkind

* George Hutchinson was educated at Glasgow, and was accounted one of the greatest preachers of the presbyterian party. He was a learned man, and wrote on the twelve Minor Prophets, on the book of Job, and on the gospel of St John. He died in the year 1674.



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reception they met with from the presbyterian laity on the other, they seem to have rapidly sunk into a state of cowardice and supineness, which extinguished all the hopes that had been raised on their appointment.

In November, 1669, a bill was laid before the parliament of Scotland, well known as the Assertory Act, which carried to an exorbitant extent the royal prerogative. It asserted, that "all things relating to the external government of the church belonged to the crown; and that all things relating to ecclesiastical meetings, matters, and persons, were to be ordered according to such directions as the king should send to his privy council." There is reason to believe that a leading object with the devisors of this bill was, to curry favor with the heir presumptive to the throne, by paving the way for the ingress of popery. Yet it was artfully contrived to catch the passions of the presbyterians, who thought the chance would be improved for the abolition of prelacy, if it rested with an individual to abrogate it at any time with a single dash of the pen, than if it could only be effected through the tedious formalities and contentious proceedings of parliament. Some moderate men, Lord Tweedale avowedly, and probably the Bishop of Dunblane, regarded this measure with more favor, or strictly speaking with less aversion, than it merited; for they imagined that it was designed only to justify the Indulgence, and to remove impediments out of the way of that pacific policy on which the king had entered. It is to be lamented that Leighton should have been inveigled by these considerations into voting for a measure, which added such dangerous powers to the crown. It was not, indeed, till after many demurs, and insisting upon several modifications, that he at length yielded it his suffrage; but what was his indignation at finding interpolated in the bill, when it came out with the royal sanction, the momentous words "ecclesiastical affairs;" while sundry saving and explanatory clauses, which had been inserted at his instance in the rough draught, were omitted! Such a scandalous fraud is very credible of the profligate statesmen of those iniquitous times, and will go far, with candid minds, to vindicate the bishop from the blame of incaution; but to the end of his days he reflected on this affair with self-reproach, and bitterly regretted that his judgment should have slumbered on such an occasion.

The first exertion of the authority vested in the sovereign by this bill was the removal of Archbishop Burnet from Glasgow, in which see he had earned but a sorry reputation for episcopal virtues. Immediately after his deposal, Leighton was pressed by the Earls of Lauderdale and Tweedale to accept the vacant dignity. To this proposal he testified the utmost repugnance, and indeed pertinaciously withstood it, till he was induced to believe that his translation to a sphere of such extensive influence would bring him nearer to the grand and governing object of his life; the king's ministry having engaged to lend its utmost support to his plan of accomodation. In consequence of this promotion, he received a summons to court; and in his way up to London he called on Dr. Gilbert Burnet, who then filled the chair of divinity at Glasgow. With him he concerted the likeliest means of composing the feuds of the church, a work in which he had embarked with the spirit of a martyr, and which he strenuously followed up by labors and watchings, through conflicts, defamation, and outrages, with toil of body and anguish of heart; a dearer price than he would have consented to give for any worldly dignities, but nothing to what he would have gladly paid down to purchase the welfare of the Christian Zion.

It has been related that, two years before, Leighton had intimated pretty plainly to the king, the necessity of resorting to some extraordinary measures, to rescue the episcopal church from impending ruin. At that conference, however, he submitted no specific expedient; fearing, perhaps, to impede his own designs by overforwardness; and convinced that the measures, which he had in contemplation, were such as royalty would never endure, until driven to them by an obvious and urgent necessity. But now that Charles had learned, from two years' longer experience, the dangerous folly of attempting to produce uniformity by compulsion; and now that Leighton, by his elevation to the metropoliton see of Glasgow, stood on more advantageous ground than heretofore for dealing plainly with the sovereign, no reason remained for delay. Mingling policy with truth, he represented the vast advantage that would accrue to his majesty's government, if the people of Scotland could be brought to a better temper. Nor was the king insensible to the sound sense of the archbishop's representations. Accordingly he acceded to all that was demanded of him, and caused a paper of instructions to be drawn up, conformable to the archbishop's ideas, and to be transmitted to the Earl of Lauderdale, accompanied with orders to that minister to obtain the enactment of corresponding laws. There are symptoms, however, in this transaction of Charles of that recklessness of falsehood, with which he was deeply tainted both in his domestic and civil character. Lauderdale, too, was a minister, whose movements always answered to the wishes of his profligate master; and it would be hard to conceive that any good scheme should pass through such hands without miscarrying or turning to evil.

When Leighton had compassed this point, his next endeavor was to generate such a spirit in his diocess as should favor his conciliatory operations; such a genial atmosphere of holy charity, if the expression may

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be allowed, as should suit with the medicinal process he had instituted for restoring the health of the country. To do this effectually it was expedient that he should remove to Glasgow; the affairs of which see, from a modest repugnance to assume the archi-episcopal dignities, he had hitherto administered as commendator only, from a distance. Indeed, it appears from the register of the parliamentary council, that, though nominated and presented, he was never formally translated to the see of Glasgow. As soon as he had removed to this city from Dunblane, he held a synod of his clergy, who were loud in their complaints of desertion and ill usage, and craved immediate redress. This appeal was not answered with promises of compelling the people to attend the church, and of inflicting fines and other punishments on the contumacious. To the surprise and mortification of the clergy, who were little accustomed to such doctrines, the only weapons recommended by their metropolitan were of ethereal temper; forbearance, conciliation, and a humble waiting upon God. "Leighton, in a sermon that he preached to them, and in several discourses both in public and private, exhorted them to look up more to God; to consider themselves as the ministers of the cross of Christ; to bear the contempt and ill usage they met with as a cross laid on them for the exercise of their faith and patience; to lay aside all the appetites of revenge; to humble themselves before God; to have many days for secret fasting and prayers; and to meet often together, that they might quicken and assist one another in those holy exercises; and then they might expect blessings from heaven upon their labors."*

Not content with these endeavors to improve his clergy, he also went about the country, taking Burnet with him, on a visit to the most influential of the indulged ministers, whom he tried to gain over by sound argumentation and by Christian gentleness. He let them know that propositions would shortly be laid before them in a more regular form, with a view of allaying the heats and jealousies that now burned so fiercely, of putting an end to the unhappy differences that now separated brother from brother, and of uniting all parties in the bonds of amicable forbearance at least, if not of perfect unanimity. He also pledged himself that the business should be carried on with unreserved cordiality; that no offers on his part should be retracted or frittered away; and that, on being accepted, they should forthwith pass into laws. But in this embassy of love he was met with chilling unkindness. Not a grain of concession could be extorted from the covenanters; who probably inferred from the gratuitous advances made toward them that the balance in the royal counsels was inclining in their favor. Perhaps, too, they were the more incapable of appreciating the frankness and ingenuity of Leighton, through being practised upon by mischievous emissaries, who found it an easy task to confirm in their obduracy minds more than half seared by protracted animosities and rancorous reflections. In their ideas the complete success of their party was identified with the triumph of Christ's church; and prelatic domination with the supremacy of Antichrist. They were debarred by an imperious conscience from entering into any terms of composition with the impure Spirit, which had issued from the bottomless pit, and was blasting their goodly Zion; and they dreaded the condemnation of Saul in the war of Amalek, should they spare any part of the Babylonish system from utter extermination. Such were their principles; and consistent with these was the welcome given to the archbishop's overtures for an accommodation. Sometimes, indeed, his condescension was requited with absolute incivility and rudeness. He therefore returned from his apostolic circuit, dispirited and almost despondent; yet still resolved to try the experiment of a solemn and official congress with the presbyterian leaders; it being possible that some spirits among them of softer mould might be wrought upon to entertain his proposals. Should the attempt fail, it would still have discovered to the nation at large, with what party it rested that the breaches of the church were not healed; and, while it fully acquitted the episcopalians of intolerance, it would expose the machinations and diminish the credit of the enemies to peace and unity.

The first meeting took place at Holyrood-House in Edinburgh, on the 9th of August, 1670. Lauderdale, the high commissioner, with some lords of the council, Leighton, Professor Burnet, and Patterson, afterward archbishop of Glasgow, formed the array on one side; and on the opposite side appeared Hutchinson, Wedderburn, Ramsay, and two other ministers of repute with their party.

Lauderdale opened the meeting with a conciliatory harangue, in which he besought the presbyterian disputants to assist the royal commissioners, in conformity with his majesty's earnest wishes, to appease the commotions of the church, and to settle it anew on a basis of reciprocal concession. He was followed by Leighton, who dwelt feelingly on the evils of schism, and detailed the calamities which had already resulted from the mutual alienation of episcopalians and anti-episcopalians; but earnestly trusted that both parties would now co-operate, heart and hand, in washing out this stain of protestantism, and introducing an era of fraternal love and concord. After notifying the readiness of the bishops to stoop to the lowest point of defensible condescension in meeting the presbyterian scruples, he drew a comparison between the rival platforms, pointing out the defects inherent in the presbyterian, and the ground there was

* Burnet's History of his own Time; book ii

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for concluding that episcopacy had existed in substance, if not in name, from the infantile age of Christianity. He labored to convince them, that many parts of the presbyterian discipline were not fortified by apostolic practice, and bore no signature of a divine appointment: that, in establishing a form of ecclesiastical government, we are free to institute offices of which the inspired volume furnishes no precedent, provided nothing contrary to the orders of Christ, and to the spirit of his religion, be admitted; and that, by submitting to the episcopal form, they would not bind themselves to comply with anything repugnant to the dispensation of the gospel, nor to tolerate any encroachment on the pastoral functions. If, however, they scrupled to allow of fixed presidents nominated by the sovereign; or if they apprehended that along with the presidency some more exceptionable jurisdiction would accrue to the bishops—against these contingents they should be at liberty to enter a prospective protest, in as full and public a manner as they pleased. Such latitude being granted to tender consciences, he thought the sacrifices it remained for them to make could only be refused by fastidious squeamishness, or vexatious obstinacy; and he conjured them to weigh the whole matter, as in the presence of God, without respect to party or popularity. No answer, or none of any consequence, was returned at the time to this powerful address; but, the following morning, Hutchinson went with his colleagues, whose prolocutor he seems to have been, to the archbishop's chamber, and there argued at length on the propositions submitted to them the preceding day. Lauderdale wanted an immediate and positive answer; but from this the ministers excused themselves, on the ground that they could speak only as individuals, having no authority to stipulate for their brethren in general. The plea was considered reasonable, and proceedings were suspended till the 1st of November; in which interval they were to collect the sentiments of their fraternity, and to come to the next conference prepared with a record, which might be acted upon as official. Lord Lauderdale was naturally haughty and irritable; and having been used to the refinement of courts, he might find it hard to brook, and would be apt to misconstrue, conscientious plain-dealing. Certain it is, however, that he imbibed on this occasion a very unfavorable opinion of the nonconformists. He complained of the behavior being rude and crafty; and it required all Leighton's fine temper and management to prevent him from handling them roughly.

About this time, the archbishop conceived a plan for purging his diocess of scandalous ministers. For this purpose he appointed a board of examiners, who were empowered to summon before them any officiating minister against whom his parishioners had charges to prefer. The king's council however interposed, and added to this consistory certain lay commissioners:— a suspicious interference, that seemed intended to perplex the business, and prevent its being done effectually. Such at least was the result; for the prosecution of clerical delinquencies was hampered with so many difficulties, and the accuser fell under such heavy penalties if he failed to substantiate his deposition, that few parishes ventured to impeach their minister, except for immoralities too notorious to be denied, and too gross to be palliated.

I can not ascertain whether it were before, or shortly after, the initial convocation, that Leighton fell upon another expedient to further the great end for which alone he seemed to live. He sent on a tour to the western counties Burnet and five other episcopal clergymen, among whom were Nairn and Charteris, divines in the highest esteem for erudition and piety. The object of this mission is variously reported. In a paper of the Lansdown manuscripts, which is copied with some additions into Wodrow's disingenuous history, it is pretended that Leighton anticipated nothing short of a national conversion from the eloquence of these missionaries. From Burnet, however, who could not be misinformed of the archbishop's motives, we learn that the directions given to himself and his associates were—"to argue upon the grounds of the accommodation." In his account of this transaction there is a palpable fairness which carries conviction. He frankly admits that the people did not flock to them in crowds, although a congregation respectably numerous was seldom wanting; and he pays a high tribute to the religious information and argumentative skill of the common people, and to their readiness on scriptural topics, though he found these excellences marred with a bitter leaven of self-conceit, and "a most entangled scrupulosity." This pious attempt was productive of no lasting benefit: for no sooner had the episcopal detachment quitted the field, than it was reoccupied by the conventicles, which had been at a stand during their stay; and hot brained preachers cast again the touch of bigotry upon materials which were lamentably prone to inflame. In truth, the measures now in train for winning over the anti-episcopal party to moderate sentiments, failing of that happy issue, did but widen the breach: as is commonly the result of abortive efforts at reconciliation. The fire, not being stifled, was stirred. Met together to canvass the proffered indulgence, the covenanters had their spirits inflamed by debate and altercation; and as they went on arguing, the points which severed them from the pale of episcopacy seemed to multiply, and to grow in importance. Regarding the overtures of the royal commissioners for a compromise, as a stratagem for enticing the gar-

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rison of presbytery into a capitulation of its principal bulwarks, they animated each other to persist in a resistance, of which they argued a speedy and glorious termination, against that twofold mystery of iniquity, prelatic dominion and servile Erastianism. "They helped every one his neighbor, and every one said to his brother, be of good courage." In vain did Leighton endeavor by papers of logical argument, or of pathetic remonstrance, to persuade them that by altering their discipline in some few particulars, which nowise affected its essence, they would only be conforming to a principle on which they had acted during Cromwell's usurpation, and even subsequently to the restoration. None of these considerations had any weight with men, the excesses of whose zeal were prescribed or ratified by a stern and moody conscience. If he attempted by letters to impress some of the more dispassionate ministers with opinions favorable to his proposal, the attempt was reprobated as unfair; and not a little offence was taken at his venturing, in epistolary correspondence with his private friends, to reflect upon the spirit which had it shown itself in the presbyterian party; and to prognosticate the failure of the negotiation.*

But Leighton, though wearied and broken-hearted, resolved to make another attempt to burst the strongholds of presbyterian prejudice, or the still less penetrable barriers of party spirit:—

"——— ter saxea tentat
Limina nequicquam; ter fessus valle resedit."

After some vexatious opposition, another conference took place at Paisley, on the 14th of December, 1670, in which the archbishop, assisted by two clergymen, entered the lists with about twenty-six of the nonconformists. It was opened in a manner illustrative of the candor and piety of Leighton, by a prayer from the oldest minister in the town. The archbishop then made an able and eloquent speech, in which he went over the old ground; but aimed especially at making his opponent sensible, how unreasonable and blameable it was to abate nothing on their side, but to exact unbounded concession from the other. He further urged them to reflect, whether they would have refused communion with the church at the period of the Nicene council; and yet episcopacy was then of a lordlier character than it now affected in Scotland.† On the other side it was contended, that archbishops were unknown to the primitive church; that bishops were parochial, and not diocesan; that two might act together in one church; and that they were elected by their presbyters, to whom they were accountable for the discharge of their functions. To these objections Professor Burnet, at the request of Leighton, who was fatigued with speaking, replied at considerable length; either controverting the facts asserted, or impeaching the conclusion drawn from them.* In the course of the debate, which was very wearing to mind and body, the archbishop's nose began to bleed; and this incident was matter of some exultation to his adversaries, who attributed it to the hard knocks he had received in the theological combat. Whether these *opima spolia* were the best grounds they had for chanting a pæan, it is not our present business to inquire. Nothing, however, was effected toward the establishment of peace. Both parties claimed the victory in argument; and not a step was taken by the presbyterians to meet the episcopalians, who carried home nothing but humiliation, after going more than half way to embrace their froward and ungracious brethren.

At the close of this conference which Leighton had industriously brought about, in hopes of giving such a turn to the temper of the nonconformists as might have a kindly influence on their final decision, he gave them in writing the propositions which had before been only verbally communicated. It was not without reluctance that he committed them to paper; and it is easy to conjecture the bad consequences he might apprehend

* See Letters in the Appendix.

† The following citation from a work entitled, "The Present State of Scotland," by Matthias Symson, Canon of Lincoln, shows that episcopacy in that country was already in point of fact, in consequence no doubt of Leighton's exertions, reduced almost as low as the nature of an episcopol church could admit.

"After the king's restoration, when bishops were re-established, none were admitted into the ministry but by episcopal ordination: though every bishop did not use the same form, yet none of them (except Bishop Mitchel) imposed what was called reordination on such as had been ordained otherwise, though they did not refuse it to such as desired it. They enjoined no form of public prayer, except the Lord's prayer; but left every minister to his own liberty, both in common, as well as occasional worship, and administration of the sacraments; they enjoined no habits (that was left to the king's disposal), though they generally wore black gowns and bands; they had no god-fathers and god-mothers, nor the cross in baptism; they required no ring in marriage, nor genufluxion in the eucharist, unless the communicant pleased. They did not demand subscription to the old and first confession of the reformers, but connived at the Westminister confessions and catechisms; they enjoined no holydays, and observed but few. For the exercise of discipline they had synods, and also presbyteries, where candidates for orders and institution were examined; who also had cognizance of all ecclesiastical cases, under the inspection and review of the diocesan. There were very few sinecures; they knew nothing of pluralities, and very little of non-residence. No lay-elders were admitted but in every parish the minister chose several of the most noted inhabitants, like a select vestry, to assist him in parochial discipline, which in effect were as ruling elders, though not admitted as, or allowed to be, gospel officers. So indulgent were the governors and other great men, that in many parishes presbyterian ministers (if they would but pray for the king, which divers of them would not do) were allowed to officiate in the churches, and receive the whole profits, without being any ways accountable to the bishop, or ecclesiastical establishment, on any score whatsoever."

* See Burnet's Vindication, &c. Fourth Conference.

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from such an instrument being divulged. Among others, it would tend to circumscribe the concessions he could make to the covenanters, and would straiten him in the exercise of that discretionary power with which he was apparently intrusted. To proclaim the meditated extent of the royal liberality, was in fact to lay a restraint upon it; since it could not well overpass the limit it had publicly prescribed to itself, without incurring the disgrace of having been forced beyond its spontaneous issue. However, it was impossible for Leighton to refuse the demand, without falling under the suspicion which would have been fatal to his further proceedings, that he was designedly leaving open a way of retreat from the performance of extorted promises. On taking leave of the ministers, he requested them to lose no time in preparing a final answer, as one would in all probability be called for by the end of January.

The meeting took place accordingly at the house of Lord Rothes, where this tedious treaty was concluded by Hutchinson, in the name of the whole fraternity, returning this "short and dry answer," as Leighton designates it; "We are not free in conscience to close with the propositions, made by the bishop of Dunblane, as satisfactory." Leighton begged for an explicit statement of their reasons for persisting in a course so contrary to the peace and welfare of the church; but the presbyterian representatives excused themselves from all argument on the subject. Being requested to submit propositions, on their part, which might furnish a hopeful basis for a fresh negotiation, they declined the invitation on the plea that their sentiments were already before the world; thereby signifying that nothing would satisfy them, short of the utter extinction of episcopacy. The archbishop perceiving that no terms would be accepted by this untractable race, delivered himself, before the assembly broke up, at considerable length and with energetic solemnity. He unfolded the motives by which he had been actuated in setting afloat this negotiation, and in still urging it forward, when wave upon wave was driving it back. "My sole object has been to procure peace, and to advance the interests of true religion. In following up this object I have made several proposals which I am fully sensible involved great diminutions of the just rights of episcopacy. Yet, since all church power is intended for edification, and not for destruction, I thought that, in our present circumstances, episcopacy might do more for the prosperity of Christ's kingdom by relaxing some of its just pretensions, than it could by keeping hold of all its rightful authority. It is not from any mistrust of the soundness of our cause that I have offered these abatements; for am well convinced that episcopacy has subsisted from the apostolic age of the church. Perhaps I may have wronged my own order in making such large concessions; but the unerring Discerner of hearts will justify my motives; and I hope ere long to stand excused with my own brethren. You have thought fit to reject our overtures, without assigning any reason for the rejection, and without suggesting any healing measures in the room of ours. The continuance of the divisions, through which religion languishes, must consequently lie at your door. Before God and man I wash my hands of whatever evils may result from the rupture of this treaty. I have done my utmost to repair the temple of the Lord; and my sorrow will not be embittered by compunction, should a flood of miseries hereafter rush in through the gap you have refused to assist me in closing."

Thus did the bark unhappily founder, which was freighted with the treasures of religious peace and concord. It was not assuredly owing to unskilful pilotage, for nothing could surpass the prudence, the knowledge, and the fortitude, displayed by the apostolic man who was seated at the helm. But the vessel was not equally happy in all who had a share in its management; and it had to contend with such a current of national feelings, of selfish passions and religious enthusiasm, as was only to be counteracted by perfect harmony in counsel and action. Nothing can be conceived more frank and magnanimous than the conduct of Leighton was throughout his transactions with the dissentient clergy; in his own account of the accommodation, the extent of his offers is thus stated:—

"It was declared to them, that the difference between us should be freely referred to the Scriptures first of all, and next to the judgment and practice of the primitive church; and to the whole catholic Christian church in succeeding ages; and to the most famous and most leading persons of the late Reformation, as Calvin, Luther, Melancthon; yea, and to the reformed churches abroad, even to those that at present have no bishops; and last of all to the presbyterians of England; and that, if from all these, or any of these, they could justify their continuing divided, even after these offers made, then it should be yielded to them as a thing reasonable. Yea, the person that propounded this further offered them, that if, before the noble and judicious persons then present, or that should be present at the time of such a conference, they should produce strong and clear reasons for their opinion and practice in this point of difference, as now it stands qualified, he would forthwith resign his present station and become their proselyte, and would unite and act with them, and if he were called to it, would suffer with them."*

It sometimes happens that measures, which owed their birth to a dangerous crisis, and at the moment were highly beneficial, are con-

* Wodrow MSS., vol. xxxiv., 4to, Art. 15.

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verted into sources of enormous evil by the folly which bids them to expire with the crisis; as though what had proved useful as a temporary expedient, must needs be salutary as a permanent institution. It is strangely forgotten that the drug, which is an invaluable specific for particular diseases, would make a very bad article of diet; and that nothing can be worse suited for domestic dress than the coat of-mail, although it is of excellent service in the field of battle. That notable compact, the League and Covenant, affords a specimen of this mischievous error. Notwithstanding it contained some very objectionable clauses, it was at its rise of real utility, in shielding the protestant confederacy from the revenge of the discomfited papists. But the terrible objurations, within which it was intrenched for the purpose of securing its immortality, and which went to bind it on future generations, changed it into a snare and a pest, into a nurse of strife and sedition; and into a barrier against peace, the moment it ceased to be a bond of concord. It was on this, indeed, that the treaty with Leighton mainly hitched. After he had proved that no rule of Scripture forbids the appointment of a bishop to be the constant president in synods; that the fixed presidency of the bishops in synods has as good warrant as the fixed moderation of a presbyter in kirk sessions, and of ruling elders; that the New Testament nowhere enjoins, directly or by implication, a parity of presbyters, but seems favorable to a regular subordination of ecclesiastical offices; that neither the name of bishop, as conferred on the superior presbyter, nor yet the manner of consecrating him to his office, can be offensive to sober-minded Christians; and that while the degree of authority vested in the bishops varied with varying circumstances, yet some such special and pre-eminent power as was now claimed, *exors quædam atque eminens potestas*, appeared from the annals of the primitive church, and the canons of the most ancient councils, to have always lodged with certain individuals:—when Leighton had proved all this by reasonings with which it was inconvenient to grapple, the presbyterians took shelter under the solemn oath, which forbade, to use their own expression, "a hoof, or so much as a hair of the Scottish model to be altered." It was vain to allege the illegality of their covenant, and the duty of renouncing an engagement, which must be criminal, if it precluded such alterations as the oracles of God demanded. It was vain to insist that a door for modification and amendment had been intentionally left open by the very framers of the covenant. Nothing was to be done with these stiffnecked disputants. The covenant, the covenant, was the watchward, by which party spirit, should it have slackened for a moment, was instantly strung to its original rigor; and the flames of fanaticism which had been slaked by the pathetic eloquence of Leighton, dropping on them "as the gentle rain from heaven," quickly broke out anew, and raged with redoubled and desperate violence.

We have had occasion to expose the punctilious cavillings of the nonconformists. Leighton has left his opinion on record that the failure of the negotiation was mainly owing to the "interest and affectation of continuing a divided party;" yet he candidly allowed that "they had more honest hearts among them, than strong heads." But, as it would be a great mistake to deny, on the one hand, that a large share of conscientious, disinterested, and high-minded feeling was intermingled with sentiments of a baser leaven, so, on the other hand, it ought not to be dissembled, that the character of most of the episcopalian leaders was far from claiming the esteem and confidence of their opponents. The most ardent promoters of the accomodation, and among them the king, were men whom it were dotage to imagine under the influence of religious principle; and the whole project was undisguisedly detested by the bench of bishops, and by the mass of the episcopalian clergy. Under these circumstances the jealousy of the covenanters admits of some palliation. They might apprehend that, however sincere Leighton himself was, they still had no guarantee for those stipulations being fulfilled, the execution of which depended on others more than on himself. They might fear that episcopacy, like the Vishnu of Hindostan, if, by creeping in under a pigmy form, it should wheedle them out of just room enough to stand upon, would straightway dilate into a giant bulk, touch the heavens with its head and "bestride the narrow world," and tread to the dust that venerable structure within the pale of which it had been rashly admitted. Possessed with these terrors, which they would naturally scruple to acknowledge, and driven back from one possession to another by the persevering condescension of Leighton, they were compelled to make a last stand behind pitiful subterfuges. In the meantime their jealousies and resentments were kept alive by the violences which were proceeding all round the narrow circle, in which the treaty was under discussion. A wise and honest policy would have suspended all severities. It would have hushed the storm of persecution which was so unpropitious to calm deliberation and amicable convention. But, instead of this being done, there came forth in the very crisis of the negotiation, an atrocious bill against conventicles, contrived to pass harmlessly over the heads of Roman catholics, but to alight with deadly force on protestant nonconformists. This edict was hurried through parliament with such indecent haste, that Leighton was not apprized of it, till the time to oppose it was past. But, true to his manly independence, he expostulated severely upon it with

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Lord Tweedale, and declared that the whole complexion of it was so contrary to the common rules of humanity, not to say Christianity, that he was ashamed to mix in council with the contrivers and abettors of such acts.

It would be more curious than useful, to speculate on the probable duration and utility of an ecclesiastical constitution, adjusted to the ideas of the Archbishop of Glasgow. No doubt, in a church, connected, as ours is, with the civil government, there would be a tendency in the episcopal part of such a constitution to supplant the presbyterian. Yet might not means be devised for checking encroachments, and for constantly restoring the system, before it had been seriously injured? It may perhaps be permitted to those who think, with Leighton, that neither one nor another outward frame of the church is absolutely essential to its integrity and usefulness, to lament that the experiment was not made, of so blending the presbyterian with the episcopal economy as to produce something nearer, than subsists in the British islands, to the primeval pattern. To suppose this impossible is to make a supposition, which both reason and experience disclaim. There is nothing in simple episcopacy that tends to despotism, beyond what obtains in every other form of government, not excepting forms of the most democratical aspect; nothing beyond what results from that ambitious propensity of our nature, which constitutional barriers may keep down, but which is always laboring upward. The spirit of domination may be more concentrated and apparent in the Anglican church, than in the Scottish, without being more abundant and hurtful. The fact is, that in every kind of regimen there are certain connatural impurities, from which it can never be thoroughly defecated. You may scum for ever, but fresh scum will still be rising, till the liquor is wholly exhausted. Some risk must be run notwithstanding all our safeguards; some feculence remain after all our refining. But it is the triumph of political wisdom, to produce with the smallest risk of the least considerable evils the largest sum of public benefit. That this praise belongs to episcopacy has often been shown with great cogency of argument; and could that form of polity be in some degree restored to its ancient simplicity, the church might be expected, under its shelter and superintendence, to attain the highest perfection of which an earthly church is capable.

Some observations of Leighton on the faulty state of the Anglican church, though peculiarly applicable to his own times, are such as may even now be pondered with advantage. Bishop Burnet has told us, that he looked on the state of the English church with very melancholy reflections; for, while he fully admitted that, in respect to doctrine and worship, and the main part of government, it was the best constituted church in the world; yet, in point of actual administration, it was one of the most defective. In discipline, which he held to be a matter of prime importance, it was, he affirmed, inferior to the corrupt church of Rome itself. He also deplored the hasty and incautious ordination of ministers, whose qualifications for the office had not been ascertained; and he regarded as a portentous evil the insufficiency of many livings for the maintenance of their incumbents, whereby it appears that some of the clergy in the north of England were driven to keep alehouses, the very men "who should have strenuously endeavored to keep themselves and others out of them." Nor did the conduct of the spiritual courts in those times escape his severe animadversion.

Leighton's advancement to Glasgow seems not to have dissolved his connexion with his former diocess; and his constant attachment to its clergy is strikingly manifested, in the following pastoral letter to the synod of Dunblane:—

"GLASGOW, *April* 6, 1671.

"REVEREND BRETHREN: The superadded burden that I have here sits so heavy upon me, that I can not escape from under it, to be with you at this time, but my heart and desires shall be with you, for a blessing from above upon your meeting. I have nothing to recommend to you, but (if you please) to take a review of things formerly agreed upon, and such as you judge most useful, to renew the appointment of putting them in practice; and to add whatsoever further shall occur to your thoughts, that may promote the happy discharge of your ministry, and the good of your people's souls. I know I need not remind you, for I am confident you daily think of it, that the great principle of fidelity, and diligence, and good success, in that great work, is love; and the great spring of love to souls, is love to him that bought them. He knew it well himself; and gave us to know it, when he said, "Simon, lovest thou me? Feed my sheep, feed my lambs." Deep impressions of his blessed name upon our hearts will not fail to produce lively expressions of it, not only in our words and discourses, in private and public, but will make the whole track of our lives to be a true copy and transcript of his holy life. And if there be within us any sparks of that divine love, you know the best way, not only to preserve them, but to excite them, and blow them up into a flame, is by the breath of prayer. Oh prayer! the converse of the soul with God, the breath of God in man returning to its original, frequent, and fervent prayer, the better half of our whole work, and that which makes the other half lively and effectual: as that holy company tells us, when appointing deacons to serve the tables, they add, "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and the ministry of the word." And is it not, brethren, our unspeakable advantage, beyond all the gainful and

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nonorable employments of the world, that the whole work of our particular calling is a kind of living in heaven, and besides its tendency to the saving of the souls of others, is all along so proper and adapted to the purifying and saving of our own? But you will possibly say, what does he himself that speaks these things unto us? Alas! I am ashamed to tell you. All I dare say is this: I think I see the beauty of holiness, and am enamored with it though I attain it not; and how little soever I attain, would rather live and die in the pursuit of it, than in the pursuit, yea, or in the possession and enjoyment, though unpursued, of all the advantages that this world affords. And I trust, dear brethren, you are of the same opinion, and have the same desire and design, and follow it both more diligently, and with better success. But I will stop here, lest I should forget myself, and possibly run on till I have wearied you, if I have not done that already: and yet if it be so, I will hope for easy pardon at your hands, as of a fault I have not been accustomed to heretofore, nor am likely hereafter often to commit. To the all-powerful grace of our great Lord and Master, I recommend you, and your flocks, and your whole work among them; and do earnestly entreat your prayers for

"Your unworthiest, but most affectionate,
"Brother and Servant,
"R. LEIGHTON."

Some time after the negotiation with the nonconformists had gone off, Leighton was required by a royal mandate to assist the Lords of the Council in nominating proper men to four vacant sees. Nairn, Charteris, and Burnet, were the persons he fixed upon to fill three of them; and he was seriously distressed to find these clergymen resolute in rejecting the appointment. At first he was disposed not to recommend any others, since those whom he considered most eligible refused to bring their shoulder under the burden. But, on mature consideration, he thought it his duty rather to present the best qualified persons who could be induced to undertake it, than to leave the appointment in hands, not apt to administer power to the advantage of true religion.

Another feeble attempt was made by the Duke of Lauderdale, in the year 1672, to reduce the turbulence of the covenanters, by executing the measure that Burnet had long before suggested, of placing the discarded ministers in parishes by couples. The Archbishop of Glasgow had already expressed his approbation of this scheme, aptly comparing it to "gathering into the chimney, where they might burn safely, the coals that were scattered over the house and setting it all on fire." The time, however, for repressing the spirit of recusancy was gone by. Dissent was now exasperated into faction; and had the times been more favorable, it would still have required a hand less wayward and inconstant than Lauderdale's, to impress a new form on the stubborn soul of presbyterianism.

Leighton now considered his work over: and began to think of withdrawing from a post, which it seemed impossible to retain with advantage to the church. While he had made no way with the nonconformists by his earnest, his affectionate, and it might almost be said, his humiliating advances, we have seen that his colleagues were ready to brand him with treachery to their cause, and more than insinuated that he plotted the overthrow of the constitution. The indulged ministers, also, and some others, among whom was Robert Law, from whose memorials I have collected the fact, occasioned him much uneasiness by their disorderly and seditious proceedings; and, indeed, by actual immoralities, which went to such a length, that he was obliged, in December, 1673, to send a deputation, with a formal complaint against them to the Privy Council. All these crosses and disappointments were regarded by Leighton, as so many providential intimations to relinquish an employment, wherein he was doing no service to the church, while sacrificing all his personal comfort. Anguish was drinking up his spirit, without benefit to the cause of religion. Accordingly, he rigorously canvassed the legality of abdicating his office: he found out several instances of bishops who had taken that step and gone into retirement; and at length he fully satisfied himself that the law of God did not require him to retain his bishopric, when the business of it was but to consume its revenues in stately indolence. On scrutinizing his own heart, he could not perceive that he was prompted to this measure by successive disgusts, by impatience of the cross, by wounded pride, by secret indignation at Providence, or by his natural propensity to a quiet, studious, and contemplative privacy. Was it not a duty, rather than a fault, to renounce a position of anxious dignity, and barren of usefulness, for one more favorable to prayer and meditation, to communion with God, and to preparation for eternity? He was now growing old and infirm; he had need to respire from overwhelming fatigues; and well could he adopt for his motto the sentence of Buchanan, "*Senectute fractus, portum exoptans.*" The dressing and undressing of his soul, as he used to call devotional exercises, was the business to which his few remaining days ought to be consecrated; and he "longed to escape, if only into the air among the birds," from the ungrateful service which he had not declined, when summoned to it by the exigencies of the church; but from which he held himself discharged, now that it was become evident that no good could ensue from his remaining in it.

We can hardly doubt that Leighton had



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been long looking out for the moment, when he might indulge, without violence to his conscience, his disposition to seclusion from the world. The following letter to his sister, Mrs. Lightmaker, apparently in the latter part of his episcopacy, lets us into his feelings on this subject:—

"DEAR SISTER: I was strangely surprised to see the bearer here. What could occasion it I do not yet understand. At parting he earnestly desired a line to you, which without his desire my own affection would have carried me to, if I knew what to say but what I trust you do: and 'tis that our joint business is to die daily to this world and self, that what little remains of our life we may live to Him that died for us. For myself, to what purpose is it to tell you, what the bearer can, that I grow old and sickly; and though I have here great retirement, as great and possibly greater than I could readily find anywhere else, yet I am still panting after a retreat from this place and all public charge, and next to rest in the grave. It is the pressingest desire I have of anything in this world; and, if it might be, with you, or near you. But our heavenly Father, we quietly resigning all to him, both knows and will do what is best. Remember my kindest affection to your son and daughter, and to Mr. Siderfin, and pray for

"Your poor weary brother,
"R. L."

"*Dunblane, April 19th.*"

This letter is dated from Dunblane, where he seems to have mostly resided, after the treaty of accommodation came to nothing. In this retreat, to which he was very partial, there is said to be still in existence a shady avenue called "The Bishop's Walk;" a name which it took from the practice of the venerable Leighton to pace up and down it, when he wished to join bodily exercise with spiritual meditation. It was probably from there that he issued the following apostolic charge to the Synod of Glasgow, which he met for the last time on the eighth day of the following December.

*Letter to the Synod of Glasgow, convened April*, 1673.

"REVEREND BRETHREN: It is neither a matter of much importance, nor can I yet give you a particular and satisfactory account of the reasons of my absence from your meeting, which I trust, with the help of a little time, will clear itself: but I can assure you, I am present with you in my most affectionate wishes of the gracious presence of that Holy Spirit among you, and within you all, who alone can make this and all your meetings, and the whole work of your ministry, happy and successful, to the good of the souls, and His glory that bought them with his own blood. And I doubt not, that your own great desire each for yourself, and all for one another, is the same; and that your daily and great employment is, by incessant and fervent prayer, to draw down from above large supplies and increases of that blessed Spirit, which our Lord and Master hath assured us that our heavenly Father will not fail to give to them that ask it. And how extreme a negligence and folly were it to want so rich a gift for want of asking, especially in those devoted to so high and holy a service, that requires so great degrees of that spirit of holiness and Divine love to purify their minds, and to raise them above their senses and this present world! Oh! my dear brethren, what are we doing, that suffer our souls to creep and grovel on this earth, and do so little aspire to the heavenly life of Christians, and more eminently of the messengers and ministers of God, as stars, yea, as angels, which he hath made spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire! Oh! where are souls to be found among us, that represent their own original, that are possessed with pure and sublime apprehensions of God, the Father of spirits, and are often raised to the astonishing contemplation of his eternal and blessed being, and his infinite holiness, and greatness, and goodness; and are accordingly burnt up with ardent love! and where that holy fire is wanting, there can be no sacrifice, whatsoever our invention, or utterance, or gifts may be, and how blameless soever the externals of our life may be, and even our hearts free from gross pollutions; for it is scarce to be suspected, that any of us will suffer any of those strange, yea, infernal fires of ambition, or avarice, or malice, or impure lusts and sensualities, to burn within us, which would render us priests of idols, of airy nothings, and of dunghill dogs, yea, of the very god of this world, the prince of darkness. Let men judge us and revile us as they please, that imports nothing at all; but God forbid anything should possess our hearts but He that loved us, and gave himself for us; for we know we can not be vessels of honor meet for the master's use, unless we purge ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and empty our hearts of all things beside, and even of ourselves and our own will, and have no more any desires nor delights, but his will alone, and his glory, who is our peace, and our life, and our all. And, truly, I think it were our best and wisest reflection upon the many difficulties and discouragements without us, to be driven by them to live more within; as they observe of the bees, that when it is foul weather abroad, they are busy in their hives. If the power of external discipline be enervated in our hands, yet who can hinder us to try, and judge, and censure ourselves; and to purge the inner temples, our own hearts, with the more severity and exactness? And if we be dashed and bespattered with reproaches abroad, to study to be the cleaner at home; and the less we find of meekness and charity

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m the world about us, to preserve so much the more of that sweet temper within our own hearts; blessing them that curse us, and praying for them that persecute us: so shall we most effectually prove ourselves to be the children of our heavenly Father, even to their conviction that will scarce allow us, in any sense, to be called his servants.

"As for the confusions and contentions that still abound and increase in this church, and threaten to undo it, I think our wisdom shall be, to cease from man, and look for no help till we look more upward, and dispute and discourse less, and fast and pray more; and so draw down our relief from the God of order and peace, who made the heavens and earth.

"Concerning myself, I have nothing to say, but humbly to entreat you to pass by the many failings and weaknesses you may have perceived in me during my abode among you; and if in anything I have injured or offended you, or any of you, in the management of my public charge, or in private converse, I do sincerely beg your pardon: though, I confess, I can not make any requital in that kind; for I do not know of anything toward me, from any of you, that needs a pardon in the least; having generally paid me more kindness and respect, than a much better or wiser man could either have expected or deserved. Nor am I only a suiter for your pardon, but for the addition of a further charity, and that so great a one, that I have nothing to plead for it, but that I need it much—your prayers. And I am hopeful as to that, to make you some little, though very disproportioned return; for whatsoever becomes of me (through the help of God), while I live, you shall be no one day of my life forgotten by

"Your most unworthy, but most affectionate
"Brother and Servant,
"R. Leighton."

"P. S. I do not see whom it can offend, or how any shall disapprove of it, if you will appoint a fast throughout your bounds, to entreat a blessing on the seed committed to the ground, and for the other grave causes that are still the same as they were the last year, and the urgency of them no whit abated, but rather increased: but in this I prescribe nothing but leave it to your discretion, and the direction of God."

The account is brief, which Burnet has given, of the last steps of this holy man's episcopal career. He repaired to court, and there tendered to Lauderdale the resignation of his dignities. At first the duke resolutely opposed this motion, but was at last prevailed upon to obtain the king's consent in writing for the archbishop's retirement at the expiration of a year, if his own mind should not have undergone a change within that period, as Lauderdale expected would be the case. The following is a copy of the royal engagement:—

"Charles R.

"It is our will and pleasure, that the present archbishop of Glasgow do continue in that station for one whole year; and we shall allow liberty to him to retire from thence at the end of that time.

"Given at our court, at Whitehall, the ninth of August, 1673; and of our reign, the twenty-fifth year. By his majesty's command."

Having gained this point, Leighton went back delighted, and observed to Burnet, that "there was now but one uneasy stage between him and rest, and he would wrestle through it the best he could." Accordingly, no sooner was the year completed, than he hastened up to London, and laid down his archbishopric, which was restored to its former possessor, Dr. Alexander Burnet. After his resignation, he resided for a short time in the college of Edinburgh, whence he retired to Broadhurst, a demesne in the parish of Horsted Keynes, Sussex, belonging to his sister, the widow of Edward Lightmaker, Esq.; and with her he continued till his death.

The slightest notice is more, perhaps, than ought to be bestowed on the account which Robert Law has penned of the transaction just narrated: since to those who have the least acquaintance with Leighton's character, it must appear on the face of it to be an absurd slander. It is pretended, that the archbishop never meant to descend from his station; but Lauderdale, whom he had offended, persuaded the king to take in good earnest his hypocritical resignation, notwithstanding the utmost efforts of Sir Ellis and other court friends to avert that catastrophe. Thus was the poor archbishop, as this shameless story-teller would have it believed, overreached in his own craftiness.

Dismissing this contemptible fabrication, and along with it another idle tale, that his object was to exchange his Scotch bishopric for one in England, we may advert to an account which, if not quite correct, yet is probably not quite devoid of truth.

The account is that Leighton, finding his authority in the diocesan synod of Glasgow but weak, while he administered that see under the title of commendator, procured himself to be elected archbishop on the 27th of October, 1671; but the Duke of Lauderdale did not ratify the election by the king's letters patent, as is usually done in such cases. Some have supposed that this disgusted Leighton, and determined or hastened his resignation. Lauderdale tried at first to divert him from this step; but when that crafty minister was endangered by a vote of the House of Commons, it occurred to him that he might gain over the episcopal bench to his side, and thus ward off an impeachment, by making use of Leighton's resignation, which was left in his hands, and [illegible]

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ting Burnet,* whose deprivation had given mortal offence to the English bishops.

It is very creditable that Lauderdale was induced by these considerations to accept the resignation, which he would otherwise have steadily refused, although it could hardly be disagreeable to him, as Leighton never stooped to solicit his favor, and seldom appeared at his levees. But this admission will nowise impugn the archbishop's sincerity in making the tender. The reasons for resigning, which he himself assigned in a paper that has appeared in Bower's History of the University of Edinburgh, will find ready credit with fair and thinking men; inasmuch as they perfectly accord with the general tone of his mind, of his life and conversation. They are the following:—

"Whatsoever others may judge, they that know what passed before my engaging in this charge will not (I believe) impute my retreat from it to levity or unfixedness of mind, considering how often I declared beforehand, both by word and writing, the great suspicions I had that my continuance in it would be very short; neither is it from any sudden passion or sullen discontent that I have now resigned it; nor do I know any cause imaginable for any such thing; but the true reasons of my retiring are plainly and briefly these:

"1. The sense I have of the dreadful weight of whatsoever charge of souls, and all kind of spiritual inspection over people, but much more over ministers, and withal of my own extreme unworthiness and unfitness for so high a station in the church; and there is an episcopal act that is above all others formidable to me—the ordaining of ministers.

"2. The continuing and daily increasing divisions and contentions, and many other disorders of this church, and the little or no appearance of their cure for our time; and as little hope amidst those contentions and disorders, of doing anything in this station to promote the great design of religion in the hearts and lives of men, which were the only reason of continuing in it, though it were with much pains and reluctance.

"3. The earnest desire I have long had of a retired and private life, which is now much increased by sickliness and old age drawing on, and the sufficient experience I have of the folly and vanity of the world.

"To add any further discourse, a large apology in this matter were to no purpose; but instead of removing other mistakes and misconstructions, would be apt to expose me to one more; for it would look like too much valuing either of myself or the world's opinion, both which I think I have so much reason to despise."

Of the habits and employments of this man of God, during the sequel of his life, there remain but few particulars. Some interesting notices, however, of his general conversation, which are mostly gleaned from his nephew's letter to the bishop of Salisbury, the pen of biography will not be employed amiss in recording.

We have seen that it was his purpose, in divorcing himself from the world, to give up the remnant of his days to secret and tranquil devotion. Having spent his prime in the active duties of his profession, and in the service of his fellow-creatures, he saw no impropriety, but rather a suitableness, in consecrating his declining years more immediately to God; and in making the last stage of earthly existence a season of unintermitted preparation for the scene upon which he was to enter at the end of his journey. Accordingly he lived in great seclusion: and abstained, to the utmost, that charity and courtesy would allow, from giving and receiving visits. Let it not be supposed, however, that he withdrew from ministerial employments. After disburdening himself of the episcopal dignity, he again took to the vocation of a parish minister, and was constantly engaged at Horsted Keynes, or one of the neighboring churches, in reading prayers or in preaching. In the peasant's cottage, likewise,

——"his tongue dropt manna:"

and long after his decease he was talked of by the poor of his village with affectionate reverence. With deep feeling would they recall his divine counsels and consolations; his tenderness in private converse; and the impressive sanctity which he carried into the solemnities of public worship.

Leighton was not by nature morose and ascetic: yet something of a cloisteral complexion appears to have been wrought in him by the character of the times, and by the scarcity of men like-minded with himself. He plunged into the solitudes of devotion, with a view to escape from the polluting commerce of the world; to gain the highest places of sacred contemplation, and to maintain perpetual intercourse with heaven.

That he was no friend to monastic seclusion is certain. He reckoned the greater number of the regular clergy in Roman Catholic countries, to be little better than *ignavi fures*, rapacious drones; at the same time that he recognised among them a few specimens of extraordinary growth in religion; and thought he had discovered in the piety of some conventual recluses a peculiar and celestial flavor, which could hardly be met with elsewhere. Of their sublime devotion he often spoke with an admiration approaching to rapture; and much he wished, that the sons of a purer faith and discipline could match them in that seraphic strength and swiftness of wing, by which they soared to the topmost branches of divine contemplation, and cropped the choicest clusters of heavenly

* This bishop was translated to St. Andrew's after the assassination of Archbishop Sharp, which took place on the third day of May, A. D. 1679, on Magus Moor. He died on the 24th of August, 1684.

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fruitage, "It is not," he would say, "the want of religious houses, but of spiritual hearts, that glues the wing of our affections, and hinders the more frequent practice of this leading precept of the divine law,—fervently to lift up our souls unto God, and to have our conversation in heaven." His opinion was that a mixed life, or, as he beautifully termed it, an angelical life, was the most excellent;—a life spent between ascending to fetch blessings from above, and descending to scatter them among mortals. Would Christians retreat occasionally from the dizzy whirl and tumult of life, and give themselves time to think, they might become enamored of those beauties which lie above the natural ken on the summit of God's holy mountain. Some of the prelates and fathers of the first ages had, according to his notions, hit the happy medium; and, by mingling pastoral ministrations with devotional retirement, had earned a better meed than is due to the votaries of a severe and unprofitable solitude.

Of the devotion which mingled with his own life, flowing easily from a wellspring of divine love in his soul, it would be hard to speak extravagantly. Prayer and praise were his business and his pleasure. His manner of praying was so earnest and importunate, as proved that his soul mounted up to God in the flame of his oral aspirations. Although none was ever less tainted with a mechanical spirit in religion, yet he denied that the use of written forms put to flight the power of devotion; and he himself occasionally used them with an energy and feeling, by which his hearers were powerfully excited. To the Lord's prayer he was particularly partial, and said of it, "Oh, the spirit of this prayer would make rare Christians!" Considering prayer, fervent, frequent, intercessory prayer, to be a capital part of the clerical office, he would repeat with great approbation that apophthegm of a pious bishop—"*Necesse est, non ut multùm legamus, sed ut multùm oremus.*" This he accounted the vessel, with which alone living water can be drawn from the well of Divine mysteries. Without it, he thought, the application of the greatest human powers to theology would turn out a laborious vanity; and in support of this opinion he adduced the confession of Erasmus, that, when he began to approach the verities of celestial wisdom, he thought he understood them pretty well; but after much study of commentators, he was infinitely more perplexed than before. With what a holy emphasis would Leighton exclaim, in commenting upon those words of David, "Thou, O God, has taught me"—"*Non homines, nec consuetudo, nec industria mea, sed tu docuisti.*"

It is not, however, to be imagined that this great prelate, who was himself one of the most learned men of a very learned age, undervalued human erudition. On the contrary, he greatly encouraged it in his clergy; and has been heard to declare that there could not be too much, if it were but sanctified. But then he set far higher store by real piety; and would remark, with a felicitous introduction of a passage from Seneca, "*Non opus est multis literis ad bonam mentem,* but to be established in grace and replenished with the spirit." Pointing to his books one day, he said to his nephew,—"One devout thought is worth them all;" meaning, no doubt, that no accumulation of knowledge is comparable in value with internal holiness.

Of his delight in the inspired volume the amplest proof is afforded by his writings, which are a golden weft, thickly studded with precious stones from that mine, in beautiful arrangement. How would he lament that most people, instead of feeding upon scriptural truths, instead of ruminating on them leisurely and prolonging the luxury as skilful epicures would do, rather swallowed them down whole like bitter pills, the taste of which is industriously disguised! His French bible, now in the library of Dunblane, is marked in numerous places; and the blank leaves of it are filled with extracts made by his own pen from Jerome, Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzen, and several other fathers. But the bible, which he had in daily use, gave yet stronger testimony to his intimate and delightful acquaintance with its contents. With the book of Psalms he was particularly conversant, and would sometimes style it by an elegant application of a scriptural metaphor, "a bundle of myrrh, that ought to lie day and night in the bosom."* "Scarce a line in that sacred psalter," writes his nephew, "that hath passed without the stroke of his pencil."

To him the sabbath was a festive day; and he would repair to God's house with a willing spirit when his body was infirm. One rainy Sunday, when through indisposition he was hardly equal to going abroad, he still persisted in attending church, and said, in excuse for his apparent rashness, "Were the weather fair I would stay at home, but since it is foul I must go; lest I be thought to countenance, by my example, the irreligious practice of letting trivial hinderances keep us back from public worship."

Averse as he was to parade of all kinds, and especially to dizening out religion in modish draperies, yet he was not for shrouding her in a gloomy cowl, and exposing her to needless scorn, as he thought the quakers did, by dressing her with "a hood and bells." It way his wish to see public worship so ordered as to exclude superfluous ornament, while it preserved those sober decencies, which at once protect the majesty of religion, and help to keep awake a devout spirit in the worshipper.

It may have appeared to some of my read-

* Song of Solomon, chap. i. v. 13.

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ers, that Leighton's latitudinarian views on the subject of ecclesiastical polity bordered upon the romantic, and were unsuitable to the present imperfect state of the Christian church. But it is due to him not to forget, that he was an inexorable enemy to laxity and disorder; and maintained the necessity of a regular and exact administration of the church, although he was comparatively indifferent about the form of that administration, if it did but ensure a good supply for the religious wants of the people. "The mode of church government," he would say, "is immaterial; but peace and concord, kindness and goodwill, are indispensable. But alas, I rarely find, in these days, men nerved with a holy resolution to contend for the substance more than for the ceremony; and disposed in weak and indifferent things to be weak and compliant." Among such things he classed those points of discipline, on which the dissenters stood out, declaring that "he could not in earnest find them to amount to more."

The religion of this pre-eminent saint was incorporated with the whole frame of his life and conversation. This gave a peculiarity, which was striking and impressive, to many of his ordinary actions. They were the same things which other men did, but they were done in another manner, and bore the shining print of his angelic spirit. So impressively was this the case, that his nephew, when a little child, struck with his reverential manner of returning thanks after a meal, observed to his mother, that "his uncle did not give thanks like other folk."

It may be doubted whether Christianity, in the days of its youthful vigor, gave birth to a more finished pattern than Leighton of the love of holiness. It was truly his reigning passion; and his longing to depart hence grew out of an intense desire to be transformed into the divine likeness. "To be content to stay always in this world," he observed, "is above the obedience of angels. Those holy spirits are employed according to the perfection of their natures, and restlessness in hymns of praise is their only rest: but the utmost we poor mortals can attain to, is to lie awake in the dark, and a great piece of art and patience it is, *spatiosam fallere noctem.*" Often would he bewail the proneness of Christians to stop short of that perfection, the pursuit of which is enjoined upon us; and it was his grief to observe, that even good men are content to be "low and stunted vines." The wish nearest his heart was, to attain to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; and all his singularities, for such to our reproach they are, arose from this desire being in him so much more ardent than it is in ordinary Christians. In the subjoined letter, this habit of mind, this insatiable longing after perfect holiness, is finely portrayed. It was written when he was principal of the University of Edinburgh.

"Sir: Oh! what a weariness is it to live among men, and find so few men; and among Christians, and find so few Christians; so much talk and so little action; religion turned almost to a tune and air of words; and amidst all our pretty discourses, pusillanimous and base, and so easily dragged into the mire, self and flesh and pride and passion domineering, while we speak of being in Christ and clothed with him, and believe it, because we speak it so often and so confidently. Well, I know, you are not willing to be thus gulled; and having some glances of the beauty of holiness, aim no lower than perfection, which in the end we hope to attain; and in the meanwhile the smallest advances toward it are more worth than crowns and sceptres. I believe it, you often think on these words of the blessed champion Paul. (1 Cor. ix. 24, &c.) There is a noble guest within us. Oh! let all our business be to entertain him honorably, and to live in celestial love within; that will make all things without be very contemptible in our eyes. I should rove on did not I stop myself, it falling out well too for that, to be hard upon the post-hours ere I thought of writing. Therefore, 'good night,' is all I add; for whatever hour it comes to your hand, I believe you are as sensible as I that it is still night: but the comfort is, it draws nigh toward that bright morning that shall make amends.

"Your weary fellow-pilgrim,
"R. L."

It would perhaps be inexpedient for every one to attain such habits of religious abstraction, and to keep as much aloof from the world, as Leighton did in the period of his life we are now reviewing. Indeed, he himself expressed his conviction, that "a thorough practical belief of those things, which we all acknowledge to be true with respect to the eternal world, would hinder us from buying and selling, and interfere with the necessary business of life; or, at least, would render it an intolerable drudgery." God is therefore indulgent to our state and condition, in not letting in upon our minds, in general, more vivid views of futurity. Nevertheless, it is of incalculable advantage to have before our eyes some bright examples of saints who have outstripped their competitors, and have gained the summit of the hill, up which the train of feebler pilgrims is still painfully toiling. Such extraordinary proficients in the life and power of godliness are the salt of the earth, to keep it from corruption. They rebuke the slackness of those half-hearted home-sick mariners, who stand off and on, wistfully eying the shore from which they have reluctantly parted, instead of launching into the deep, and making sail for a better country. They prevent a scandalous depression of the standard of Christian piety; they animate the despondent to hope and perseverance; and they exhibit,

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with a demonstration which puts to shame the cavils of the skeptic, the superiority of Christian philosophy, in the formation of character, to the most elaborate systems of human ethics.

Of the effectual eloquence of Leighton's great example, a striking instance is adduced in Mr. Edward Lightmaker's letter. The writer's father, after witnessing the holy and mortified life of this eminent saint, became sensible, that a man is in no safe condition for dying, unless he be striving after the highest degrees of piety. "If none shall go to heaven," he exclaimed, "but so holy a man as this, what will become of me?" Under these impressions he very much withdrew from the world; relinquished a profitable business, because of its dangerous entanglements; and made the care of his ultimate felicity his chief occupation.

Such consequences might well be expected to flow from an intimacy with Leighton, for his discourse breathed the spirit of heaven. To no one, perhaps, do the exquisite lines of the Christian poet Cowper more accurately apply:—

> "When one, that holds communion with the skies,
> Has filled his urn where these pure waters rise,
> And once more mingles with us meaner things,
> 'Tis e'en as if an angel shook his wings;
> Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,
> That tells us whence his treasures are supplied."

He seldom discoursed on secular matters, without happily and naturally throwing in some spiritual reflections; and it was his professed opinion, that nothing takes off more from the authority of ministers and the efficacy of their message, than a custom of vain and frivolous conversation. Indeed, "he had brought himself into so composed a gravity," writes his first biographer, "that I never saw him laugh, and but seldom smile; and he kept himself in such a constant recollection, that I do not remember that I ever heard him say one idle word. He seemed to be in a perpetual meditation." Although he was not at all given to sermonize, yet any little incident, that fell under his observation, would cause some pious sentiment to drop from him; just as the slightest motion makes a brimful goblet run over. Meeting a blind beggar one day, he observed, "Methinks this poor sufferer cries out in behalf of the whole human race, as its representative; and let what he so earnestly craves be given him, as readily as God bestows a cure on the spiritually blind who ask it."—"It is extremely severe," said his sister to him, speaking of the season. "But thou, O God, hast made summer and winter," was his devout reply. Some one saying, "You have been to hear a sermon;" "I met a sermon," was his answer, "a sermon *de facto*, for I met a corpse; and rightly and profitably are the funeral rites observed, when the living lay it to heart." Thus he endeavored to derive spiritual good out of every passing circumstance, and to communicate good to others.

In a soul so full of heaven there was little room for earthly attachments. Indeed, the whole tone of his discourse, and the constant tenor of his life, evinced his detachment, not only from pomps, and riches, and delicacies, but from what are usually esteemed to be common comforts and necessaries. To his judgment the middle condition of life best approved itself. "Better to be in the midst," were his words, "between the two pointed rocks of deep penury and high prosperity, than to be on the sharps of either." But his choice, to quote his own emphatic expression, was to choose nothing, and he left it to a better wisdom than his own to carve out his earthly lot. "If we are born to worldly greatnesses, let us even take them, and endeavor to make friends with them who shall stand us in good stead when we are put out of our stewardship: but to desire that our journey should be by the troublesome and dangerous road of worldly prosperity, is a mighty folly." He was pleased with an ingenious similitude of Dr. Sale's, who compares the good things of this life to mushrooms, which need so many precautions in eating, that wholly to waive the dish is the safest wisdom.

To corporal indulgences none was ever more indifferent. Indeed he practised a rigorous abstemiousness, keeping three fasts in the week, and one of them always on the Sunday; not from a superstitious esteem of the bodily penance, but in order to make the soul light and active for the enjoyment of that sacred festival. His nephew thinks that he injured his health by excessive abstinence: but his own maxim was, "that little eating, and little speaking, do no one any harm;" and he would say pleasantly when dinner was announced, "Well, since we are condemned to this, let us sit down." His notions of the moderation, which Christians ought to exercise at the table, will be generally accounted extravagant. When his sister once invited him to eat of a particular dish, extolling it as very good, he declined it, saying, "What is it good for, but to please a wanton taste? One thing forborne is better than twenty things taken." "But," answered Mrs. Lightmaker, "why were these things bestowed upon us?" "To see," he rejoined, "how well we could forbear them;" and then added, "Shall I eat of this delicacy, while a poor man wants his dinner?" He thought people in general much too expensive and curious in the preparation of their meals, and wished this domestic profusion were turned into a channel of distribution to the poor. Everything beyond the mere necessaries of life he termed the overflowings of a full cup, which ought not to run to waste, but descend into the poor man's platter. The gratifications of bodily appetite would not, he was persuaded,

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be so much reckoned on, if professed Christians had more "spiritual sensuality," as he often termed that ardent relish, which is the characteristic of rectified souls, for the meat and drink, the hidden manna, of God's immortal banquet.

He used to compare a man's station in life to an imprisonment, and observed, that, "although it is becoming to keep the place of our confinement clean and neat, it were ill done to build upon it." His sister thinking he carried his indifference to earthly things too far, and that his munificence required some check, said to him once, "If you had a wife and children you must not act thus." His answer was, "I know not how it would be, but I know how it should be. 'Enoch walked with God;—and begat sons and daughters.'"

In truth, his liberality was boundless. All he received was distributed to the poor, except the bare pittance which his necessities imperiously demanded for himself. Unwilling, however, to gain any credit for beneficence, he commonly dispensed his bounty through the hands of others, as we learn from Burnet, who officiated as his almoner in London.

In exemplification of his humane and amiable condescension to his friends and dependants, there is an anecdote, which will not disgrace our pages. He once had a Roman catholic servant, who made a point of abstaining from flesh on the fast days prescribed by the Romish calendar. Leighton, being apprized of this, by Mrs. Lightmaker, commented on the vanity of such scruples, yet requested her to indulge the poor man with such fare as suited his erroneous piety, lest the endeavor to dissuade him from the practice should drive him to falsehood or prevarication. "For to this," he added, "many poor creatures are impelled, not so much from a corrupt inclination, as for want of a handsome truth." So gentle was he in his construction of the faults and foibles of others.

It is of little moment to ascertain, even were it possible, whether this be the identical man-servant, whose idle pranks have earned him a never-dying fame in Dunblane and its neighborhood. The following story may be taken as a sample of the provocations, with which this thoughtless fellow used to try his master's equanimity. Having a fancy one morning for the diversion of fishing, he locked the door of the house, and carried off the key, leaving his master imprisoned. He was too much engrossed with his sport to think of returning till the evening, when the only admonition he received for his gross behavior from the meek bishop, was, "John, when you next go a fishing, remember to leave the key in the door."

The whole history of Leighton's life proclaims his abhorrence of persecution. It is related that his sister once asked him, at the request of a friend, what he thought was the mark of the Beast; at the same time adding, "I told the inquirer that you would certainly answer you could not tell." "Truly you said well," replied Leighton, "but, if I might fancy what it were, it would be something with a pair of horns that pusheth his neighbor, and hath been so much seen and practised in church and state." He also passed a severe sentence on the Romanists, "who, in their zeal for making proselytes, fetched ladders from hell to scale heaven:" and he deeply lamented, that men of the reformed church should have given in to similar measures.

We have seen, in the narrative of his public conduct, how firmly he withstood the severe measures set afoot to produce a uniformity of worship in Scotland. Swords and halberds, tongs and pincers, were very unfit instruments, in his esteem, for advancing the science and practice of religion. "The scripture tells us, indeed, of plucking out a right eye for the preservation of the whole body; but if that eye admit of a cure, it should rather be preserved; only let its cure be committed to the dexterous hands of the kindest oculist, and not to a mere bungler, who would mar instead of healing. For himself he would suffer anything, rather than touch a hair of the head of those, who labored under such pitiable maladies, as errors in faith must be accounted. Or, if did meddle with them, it should be with such a gentle touch, as would prove the friendliness of his disposition and purpose." "I prefer," he has been heard to say, "an erroneous honest man before the most orthodox knave in the world; and I would rather convince a man that he has a soul to save, and induce him to live up to that belief, than bring him over to my opinion in whatsoever else beside. Would to God that men were but as holy as they might be in the worst of forms now among us! Let us press them to be holy, and miscarry if they can." Being told of a person who had changed his persuasion, all he said was, "Is he more meek; more dead to the world? If so, he has made a happy change."

It is related of him, that going one day to visit a leading minister of the presbytery, he found him discoursing to his company on the duties of a holy life. Leighton, instead of turning off to the subject of the current reasons for nonconformity, though he had gone for the express purpose of discussing them, instantly fell in with the train of conversation, and concluded his visit without attempting to change it. To some of his friends who remonstrated with him on this apparent oversight, "Nay," he replied, "the good man and I were in the main agreed: and for the points in which we differ, they are mostly unimportant; and though they be of moment, it is advisable before pressing any, to win as many volunteers as we can."

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This feature of his character is further illustrated by an anecdote, which there is every reason to believe authentic. A friend calling upon him one day, and not meeting him at home, learned, on inquiry, that he was gone to visit a sick presbyterian minister on a horse which he had borrowed of the catholic priest.

His sobriety of mind and soundness of judgment ought not to be passed over in silence. These qualities were conspicuous in his never pretending to develop the secret things of God, notwithstanding the variety of his learning, and his talent for high speculation. Instead of hazarding a guess on a difficult point, to which he had been requested to turn his thoughts, he said to the inquirer, on meeting him some time afterward, "I have not yet got the lesson you set me." And to his nephew, who complained that there was a certain text of scripture which he could not understand, his answer was, "And many more that I can not." In reverently standing aloof from those mysteries of the divine nature and government, which are enshrined in a light no mortal eye can gaze upon undazzled, he discovered a judgment equal to his modesty, and exemplified the saying of Solomon, that "with the lowly is wisdom." Being once interrogated about the saints reigning with Christ, he tried to elude the question by merely replying, "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." Pressed, however, to give his opinion, whether or not the saints would exercise rule in the earth, although Christ should not in person assume the sovereignty, he answered with exquisite judgment, "If God hath appointed any such thing for us, he will give us heads to bear such liquor: our preferment shall not make us reel." Prying into matters of this nature, which the spirit of God has apparently sealed up from man's inquisitiveness, was, in his estimation, indecent and dangerous; and he thought that passionate curiosity, which overleaps the boundaries of revelation, might be well rebuked by the angel's answer to Manoah, "Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?" "Enough," he said, "is discovered to satisfy us, that righteousness and judgment are within, although round about his throne are clouds and darkness:" and he blamed those, "who boldly venture into the very thick darkness and deepest recesses of the divine majesty." "That prospect of election and predestination," said he, "is a great abyss, into which I choose to sink, rather than attempt to sound it. And truly any attempt at throwing light upon it makes it only a greater abyss, and is a piece of blamable presumption." In conformity with these sound views, he always endeavored, when principal of the university of Edinburgh, to repress such perilous inquiries; judging them of a nature to make young students conceited, disputatious, and skeptical, and to lead them away from the love of truth and the practice of piety.

How discreet and tender a counsellor he was to persons laboring under religious doubts and perplexities, the two following letters bear witness. The first of these is to a lady of quality to whom he was personally unknown, but who seems to have solicited his advice through the intervention of a common friend:—

"MADAM: Though I have not the honor to be acquainted with your ladyship, yet a friend of yours has acquainted me with your condition, though, I confess, the unfittest of all men to minister anything of spiritual relief to any person, either by prayer or advice to you; but he could have imparted such a thing to none of greater secrecy, and withal of greater sympathy and tender compassion toward such as are exercised with those kind of conflicts; as, having been formerly acquainted with the like myself, all sorts of skeptical and doubtful thoughts touching those great points, having not only passed through my head, but some of them have for sometime sat more fast and painfully upon my mind; but in the name of the Lord they were at length quite dispelled and scattered. And oh! that I could love and bless Him, who is my deliverer and strength, my rock and fortress, where I have now found safety from these incursions; and I am very confident you shall shortly find the same; only wait patiently on the Lord, and hope in him, for you shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance; and it is that alone that can enlighten you, and clear your mind of all those fogs and mists that now possess it, and calm the storms that are raised within it. You do well to read good books that are proper for your help, but rather the shortest and plainest, than the more tedious and voluminous, that sometimes entangle a perplexed mind yet more, by grasping many more questions, and answers, and arguments than is needful: but above all still cleave to the incomparable spring of light and divine comfort, the Holy Scriptures, even in despite of all doubts concerning them. And when you find your thoughts in disorder and at a loss, entertain no dispute with them by any means at that time, but rather divert from them to short prayer, or to other thoughts, and sometimes to well chosen company, or the best you can have where you are; and at some other time, when you find yourself in a calmer and serener temper, and upon the vantage ground of a little more confidence in God, then you may resume your reasons against unbelief, yet so as to beware of casting yourself into new disturbance. For when your mind is in a sober temper, there is nothing so suitable to its strongest reason, nothing so wise and noble as religion; and to believe it is so rational, that, as now I am framed, I am afraid that my belief proceeds



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too much from reason, and is not so divine and spiritual as I would have it; only when I find (as in some measure through the grace of God I do) that it hath some real virtue and influence upon my affections and track of life, I hope there is somewhat of a higher tincture in it. But, in point of reason I am well assured, that all that I have heard from the wittiest atheists and libertines in the world, is nothing but bold ravery and madness, and their whole discourse a heap of folly and ridiculous nonsense. For what probable account can they give of the wonderful frame of the visible world, without the supposition of an eternal and infinite power and wisdom and goodness that formed it, and themselves, and all things in it? And what can they think of the many thousands of martyrs in the first age of Christianity, that endured not simple death, but all the inventions of the most exquisite tortures, for their belief of that most holy faith, which, if the miracles that confirmed it, had not persuaded them so, they themselves had been thought the most prodigious miracles of madness in all the world? It is not want of reason on the side of religion that makes fools disbelieve it, but the interest of their brutish lusts and dissolute lives, makes them wish it were not true: and there is this vast difference betwixt you and them; they would gladly believe less than they do, and you would also gladly believe more than they do: they are sometimes pained and tormented with apprehensions that the doctrine of religion is, or may be, true; and you are perplexed with suggestions to doubt of it, which are to you as unwilling and unwelcome, as these apprehensions of its truth are to them. Believe it, madam, these different thoughts of yours, are not yours, but his that inserts them, and throws them as fiery darts into your mind, and they shall assuredly be laid to his charge, and not to yours. Think you that Infinite Goodness is ready to take advantage of his poor creatures, and to reject and condemn those, that, against all the assaults made upon them, desire to keep their heart for him, and to acknowledge him, and to love him, and live to him? He made us, and knows our mould, and as a father pities his children pities them that fear him: for he is their father, and the tenderest and kindest of all fathers; and, as a father pities his child when it is sick, and in the rage and ravery of a fever, though it even utter reproachful words against himself, shall not our dearest Father both forgive and pity those thoughts in any child of his, that arise not from any wilful hatred of him, but are kindled in hell within them? And no temptation hath befallen you in this, but that which has been incident to men, and to the best of men; and their heavenly father hath not only forgiven them, but in due time hath given them a happy issue out of them, and so he will assuredly do to you. In the meantime, when these assaults come thickest and violentest upon you, throw yourself down at his footstool, and say; 'O God, Father of mercies, save me from this hell within me. I acknowledge, I adore, I bless thee, whose throne is in heaven, with thy blessed Son and crucified Jesus, and thy Holy Spirit, and also though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee: but I can not think thou canst hate and reject a poor soul that desires to love thee, and cleave to thee, so long as I can hold by the skirts of thy garment until thou violently shake me off, which I am confident thou wouldst not do, because thou art love and goodness itself, and thy mercies endure for ever.' Thus, or in what other frame your soul shall be carried to vent itself into his bosom, be assured, your words, yea, your silent sighs and breathings shall not be lost, but shall have a most powerful voice and ascend into his ear, and shall return to you with messages of peace and love in due time, and, in the meantime, with secret supports, that you faint not, nor sink in these deeps that threaten to swallow you up. But I have wearied you instead of refreshing you. I will add no more, but that the poor prayers of one of the unworthiest caitiffs in the world, such as they be, shall not be wanting on your behalf, and he begs a share in yours; for neither you, nor any in the world, need that charity more than he does. Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."

The next is to some Christian friend, whose name is unknown:—

"CHRISTIAN FRIEND: Though I had very little vacant time for it, yet I would have seen you, if I could have presumed it might have been any way useful for the quieting of your mind. However, since I heard of your condition, I cease not daily, as I can, to present it to Him, who alone can effectually speak peace to your heart; and I am confident, in due time, will do so. It is he that stilleth the raging of the sea; and by a word can turn the violentest storm into a great calm. What the particular thoughts or temptations are that disquiet you, I know not; but whatsoever they are, look above them, and labor to fix your eye on that infinite goodness, which never faileth them, that, by naked faith, do absolutely rely and rest upon it, and patiently wait upon him, who hath pronounced them all, without exception, blessed that do so. Say often within your own heart; Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; and if, after some intervals, your troubled thoughts do return, check them still with the holy Psalmist's words; Why art thou cast down, O my soul, &c. If you can thoroughly sink yourself down, through your own nothingness, into Him who is all, and entirely renouncing your own will,

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embrace that blest and holy will in all things, there I am sure you shall find that rest, which all your own distempers, and all the powers of darkness shall not be able to deprive you of. I incline not to multiply words; and, indeed, other advice than this I have none to give you. The Lord of peace, by the sprinkling of the blood of his Son Jesus, and the sweet breathings of the great Comforter, his own Holy Spirit, give you peace in himself. Amen."

We learn from Burnet, "that his thoughts were lively, oft out of the way and surprising, yet just and genuine;" and several of his sayings might be adduced to justify this praise, and to show him well read in the science of human nature and its management. It was an aphorism of his, that "One half of the world lives upon the madness of the other." He well knew, writes his nephew, when it was expedient to be silent, and when it behooved him to speak—a knowledge not less rare than valuable. One of his favorite axioms was, that "All things operate according to the disposition of the subject:" and he was of opinion, that the silence of a good man will sometimes convey a more effectual lesson than his discourse. Two things, he observed, are commonly requisite to make religious advice salutary, namely, time and judgment; and he thought the following maxim might often be remembered with advantage,—*philosophandum, sed paucis.* Accordingly, he was quite against jading hearers with discourses beyond the measure of their understanding, or their patience: "for 'tis better," said he, "to send them home still hungry than surfeited." He was no advocate in general for crude and abrupt exposures of unpalatable truths. Being told of an author, who had entitled his performance, "Naked truth whipt and stript," his remark was, "It might have been better to clothe it;" and he saw nothing praiseworthy in the roughness, misnamed honesty, of some people, "who would rather overturn the boat than trim it." I shall only add, in illustration of this point of his character, a prayer which he used to offer up, which is pregnant with melancholy meaning: "Deliver me, O Lord, from the errors of wise men; yea, and of good men."

Of his humility, that grace so lovely in the eyes of Heaven, and which was truly his crowning grace, it would be difficult to take the dimensions. Burnet mentions that "he seemed to have the lowest thoughts of himself possible, and to desire that all other persons should think as meanly of him, as he did of himself; and he bore all sorts of ill usage and reproach, like a man that took pleasure in it."

This character of his mind is finely illustrated in the following passage from one of his letters.

"And now I have begun, I would end just here; for I have nothing to say, nothing of affairs (to be sure) private nor public; and to strike up to discourses of devotion, alas! what is there to be said, but what you sufficiently know, and daily read, and daily think, and, I am confident, daily endeavor to do? And I am beaten back, if I had a great mind to speak of such things, by the sense of so great deficiency, in doing those things that the most ignorant among Christians can not choose but know. Instead of all fine notions, I fly to Κύριε ἐλέησον, Χριστὲ ἐλέησον. I think them the great heroes and excellent persons of the world, that attain to high degrees of pure contemplation and divine love, but next to those, them that in aspiring to that and in falling short of it, fall down into deep humility, and self-contempt, and a real desire to be despised and trampled on by all the world. And I believe that they that sink lowest into that depth, stand nearest to advancement to those other heights: for the great King who is the fountain of that honor, hath given us this character of himself, that He resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. Farewell, my dear friend, and be so charitable as sometimes in your addresses upward, to remember a poor caitiff, who no day forgets you.

"13*th December*, 1676. "R. L."

On the eve of taking a bishopric, when he perceived how many obstacles there were to his doing the good he wished to others, "Yet one benefit at least," said he, "will arise from it; I shall break that little idol of estimation my friends have for me, and which I have been so long sick of." Though he could not be ignorant of the value set on his pulpit discourses by the public,—for never was a wandering eye seen when he preached, but the whole congregration would often melt into tears before him,—yet the most urgent entreaties of his friends could never obtain from him the publication of a single sermon. Indeed, he looked upon himself as so ordinary a preacher, and so unlikely to do good, that he was always for giving up his place to other ministers; and after he became a bishop, he always preferred preaching to small congregations, and would never give notice beforehand when he was to fill the pulpit. Of a piece with his rooted dislike to anything, that seemed to imply consequence in himself, was his strong objection to have his portrait taken. When it was requested of him, he testified unusual displeasure, and said, "If you will have my likeness, draw it with charcoal:" meaning, no doubt, that he was *carbone notandus*, as justly obnoxious to scorn and condemnation. His picture was, however, clandestinely taken when he was about the middle age: and as the engravings prefixed to his works are copied from it, it is a pleasure to know from such good authority as his nephew's letter, that it greatly resembled him.

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Nature had endowed him with a warm and affectionate disposition, which was not extinguished by his superlative love to God, though it was always kept in due subordination. In his commentary on the epistle of Peter he remarks, that "our only safest way is to gird up our affections wholly;" and he lived up to this principle. Accordingly, after avowing once, how partial he was to the amiable character and fine accomplishments of a relation, he added, "Nevertheless I can readily wean myself from him, if I can not persuade him to become wise and good; *Sine bonitate nulla majestas, nullos sapor.*" To him, as to that Holy One of whose spirit he partook largely, whoever did the will of his heavenly Father were more than natural kindred. Such, therefore, of his relations as were Christians indeed, had a double share of his tenderness; and to the strength of this twofold bond, not less than to his heavenly-mindedness, we may ascribe his exclamation on returning from the grave, in which his brother-in-law had been interred: "Fain would I have thrown myself in with him." A beautiful extract from a letter, which he wrote to that gentleman on the death of a particularly sweet and promising child, to whom he himself was tenderly attached, may here find a suitable place.

"I am glad of your health and recovery of your little ones; but indeed it was a sharp stroke of a pen, that told me your pretty Johnny was dead: and I felt it truly more than, to my remembrance, I did the death of any child in my lifetime. Sweet thing, and is he so quickly laid to sleep? Happy he! Though we shall have no more the pleasure of his lisping and laughing, he shall have no more the pain of crying, nor of being sick, nor of dying: and hath wholly escaped the trouble of schooling, and all other sufferings of boys, and the r per and deeper griefs of riper years, this poor life being all along nothing but a linked chain of many sorrows and many deaths. Tell my dear sister she is now much more akin to the other world: and this will quickly be passed to us all. John is but gone an hour or two sooner to bed, as children use to do, and we are undressing to follow. And the more we put off the love of this present world and all things superfluous, beforehand, we shall have the less to do, when we lie down. It shall refresh me to hear from you at your leisure.

"Sir, your affectionate brother,
"EDINBRO', *Jan. 16th.*" "R. LEIGHTON.

Leighton was a great admirer of rural scenery; and, in his rides upon the Sussex downs, he often descanted, with sublime fervor, on the marvellous works of the almighty Architect. Adverting to the boundless varieties of creation, he remarked, that there is no wonder after a straw, omnipotence being as necessary to make the least things out of nothing as the greatest. But his lofty mind seemed especially to delight in soaring to the celestial firmament, and expatiating through those stupendous vaults, from which so many glorious lamps are hung out, on purpose he believed to attract our thoughts to the glory that excelleth; and "we miss the chief benefit they are meant to render us, if we use them not to light us up to heaven." "It was a long hand," he would exclaim, "and a strong hand too, that stretched out this stately canopy above us; and to him whose work it is we may rightly ascribe most excellent majesty." After some such expressions of devout amazement, he would sink into silent and adoring contemplation.

Leighton was fond of music both vocal and instrumental, and delighted in its appropriation to divine uses; but he disapproved of its being made subservient to a refined sensuality, and declared that he preferred the croaking of frogs to the idle songs, which professed Christians sing and play without blushing or compunction. He contrasted the harp and psaltery of David, rehearsing the praises of the Lord, with the tabret and pipe, so loathed by Isaiah, because they were employed to inflame the passions and tickle the fancies of lewd wassailers, and to divert their thoughts from those operations of the Lord's hands, "which utter the most harmonious music."

We have seen that his walk was direct to heaven, and the drift of his conversation habitually unearthly. He died daily by the mortification of his natural appetites and affections; and he was visibly perfect in that frame of mind, which he wondered should not be universal, "in which every second thought is of death." It was not in a melancholy tone that he touched on this serious subject; for the illusions spread over earthly things had long since faded away from his eyes, which were fixed in the sublime anticipations of faith on those blissful realities, that shall open upon the redeemed of the Lord, when they have shaken off mortality. To him, therefore, death had lost its sting: it was become a pleasant theme; and gave occasion to some of his most cheerful sayings. He would compare this heavy clod of clay, with which the soul is encumbered, to the miry boots, of which the traveller gladly divests himself on finishing his journey: and he could not disguise his own wish to be speedily unclothed, instead of lingering below till his garments were worn out and dropped off through age. In general, his temper was serene rather than gay; but his nephew states, that if ever it rose to an unusual pitch of vivacity, it was when some illness attacked him:—when "from the shaking of the prison doors, he was led to hope, that some of those brisk blasts would throw them open, and give him the release he coveted." Then he seemed to stand tiptoe on the margin of eternity, in a delightful amazement of spirit, eagerly awaiting the summons to depart, and feeding his soul with the prospect of immortal life and

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glory. Sometimes, while contemplating his future resting-place, he would break out into that noble apostrophe of pious George Herbert;

> "O let me roost and nestle there;
> Then of a sinner thou art rid,
> And I of hope and fear."

Hearing once of the death of a portly man; "How is it," he exclaimed, "that A——— has broke through those goodly brick walls, while I am kept in by a bit of flimsy deal?" He would say pleasantly, that he had his nightcap on, and rejoiced that it was so near bedtime, or, rather, so near the hour of rising to one who had long lain awake in the dark; and pointing to the children of the family, one evening, who were showing symptoms of weariness and importuning to be undressed; "Shall I," said he, "who am threescore and ten, be loath to go to bed?" This world he considered a state of nonage, and the land of mature men a land very far off. No apophthegm of inunspired wisdom pleased him more than that of Seneca: "*Illa dies, quam ut supremam metuisses, æternitatis natalis est.*" His alacrity to depart resulted from his earnest desire to "see and enjoy perfection in the perfect sense of it, which he could not do and live." "That consummation," he would say, "is truly a hope deferred; but, when it cometh, it will be a tree of life." Perhaps, indeed, he would have been over-anxious to take wing, had not his impatience been balanced by profound submission to the divine good pleasure. This alone prevented an excessive desire for the moment to arrive, when his soul, completely fledged, should spring into its proper element; should remove far away, not only from the wickednesses of a profane world, but also from the childishnesses of religious Christians; and should be at rest amidst the truly reformed churches of just men made perfect,—those happy circumferences, as he termed them, which are intimately and perfectly united to their solatious centre, and to each other.

An extract from a letter, supposed to have been written a short time before his death, may here be aptly inserted.

"I find daily more and more reason without me, and within me yet much more, to pant and long to be gone. I am grown exceeding uneasy in writing and speaking, yea almost in thinking, when I reflect how cloudy our clearest thoughts are: but, I think again what other can we do, till the day break and the shadows flee away, as one that lieth awake in the night must be thinking; and one thought that will likely oftenest return, when by all other thoughts he finds little relief, is, *when will it be day?*"

Yet Leighton, for the comfort of weak believers be it recorded, did not pretend to an absolute assurance of final salvation. Conversing, one day, in his wonted strain of holy animation, of the blessedness of being fixed as a pillar in the heavenly Jerusalem to go no more out,* he was interrupted by a near relation exclaiming, "Ah, but you have assurance!" "No, truly," he replied, "only a good hope, and a great desire to see what they are doing on the other side, for of this world I am heartily weary."

Such was the holy man, of whom little now remains to be told, except his dismissal from this troublesome scene to that place among

> ——— "The sanctities of heaven,"

which he had long preoccupied in affection and spirit.

After a retirement of five years, he was alarmed by receiving a letter in the king's own hand, which threatened him with an order to exchange his peaceful retreat for the distraction and turbulence of a public station. The letter ran as follows:—

"WINDSOR, *July* 16, 1679.

"MY LORD: I am resolved to try what clemency can prevail upon such in Scotland, as will not conform to the government of the church there; for effecting of which design, I desire that you may go down to Scotland with your first conveniency; and take all possible pains for persuading all you can of both opinions to as much mutual correspondence and concord as can be: and send me from time to time characters both of men and things. In order to this design, I shall send a precept for two hundred pounds sterling upon my Exchequer, till you resolve how to serve me in a stated employment.

"Your loving Friend,
"CHARLES R.

"*For the Bishop of Dunblane.*"

It was sent at the urgent suit of the Duke of Monmouth, who then administered the affairs of Scotland, and who was anxious for Leighton to go back and reside in that country, although he should not consent to resume his episcopal office. Leighten was willing to take this step, if any likelihood could be shown of benefit resulting from it; but the duke's credit failing shortly afterward, this project seems to have fallen with it.

In the year 1684, Leighton was earnestly requested by Burnet to go up to London, and to visit Lord Perth, who had begun to feel compunction for his lamentable departure from virtue, and had expressed an earnest desire to have the benefit of the bishop's counsel. The hope of reclaiming that unhappy nobleman prevailed over personal considerations, and he went up to London accordingly, healthy in appearance, but with feelings of illness, which may account for his presentiment that his dissolution was at hand. "The worse I am," said he in the plenitude of his self-denying benevolence, "the more I choose to go, that I may give one pull at yon poor brother, and snatch him, if possible, from the infectious air of the court." Burnet had not seen him

* Rev. iii. 12.

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for a considerable time before, and was astonished at the freshness and vigor which appeared in him notwithstanding his advanced age. His hair was still black, and his motions were lively; and his devotion shone forth with the same lustre and vivacity as ever. On his friend, however, expressing great pleasure at seeing him look so hearty, Leighton observed, that for all that he was very near his end, and his work and journey both were now almost done. This answer made little impression on Burnet at the time; but his mind reverted to it, after the event of three more days had stamped it with a prophetic emphasis.

The very next day he was attacked with an oppression on the chest, and with cold and stitches, which proved to be the commencement of a pleurisy. He sunk rapidly, for on the following day both speech and sense had left him; and, after panting for about twelve hours, he expired without a struggle in the arms of Bishop Burnet, his intimate friend, his ardent and affectionate admirer. Nothing is recorded of his last hours: and indeed the disease that carried him off was such, by its nature and rapid progress, as to preclude much speaking. But no record is necessary of the dying moments of a man, who has served God from his infancy; and whose path had been a shining light up to the moment when the shades of death closed over it. God was, assuredly, the strength of his heart in the hour of his last agony, and is now his glorious portion, his exceeding and eternal great reward. It was needless for himself that he should have notice of the bridegroom's coming; for his lamp was always trimmed, his loins were always girded. To his surviving friends it could have afforded little additional satisfaction, to have heard him express, on his death-bed, that faith and holy hope, of which his life had been one unbroken example: neither could he have left, for the benefit of posterity, any sayings more suitable to a dying believer than those he daily uttered; living, as he had long lived, on the confines of the eternal world, and in the highest frame of spirituality that it seems possible for an imbodied soul to attain. He entered into his rest, on the 25th of June, A. D. 1684, in the seventy-fourth year of his age.

Two circumstances connected with his death ought not to be unnoticed. He had often said, that if he were to choose a place to die in, it should be an inn. In such a place he thought that a Christian believer might properly finish his pilgrimage; the whole world being to him but a large and noisy inn, and he a wayfarer, tarrying in it as short a time as possible, and then hasting away to his Father's house. Besides, he considered it undesirable to be surrounded by weeping friends and officious domestics, whose sorrowful attentions might unnerve and distract the mind, when it ought to be wholly collected and set upon God; whereas no such disturbance of spirit would result from the unconcerned ministry of strangers. This singular wish was gratified, for he breathed his last in the Bell Inn, Warwick Lane.

The other circumstance is this. While he resided on his diocess in Scotland, his forbearance with his tenants was so great, that at the time of his resignation considerable sums were due to him. His subsequent income seems to have arisen principally from these arrears, which dropped in slowly from time to time; and the last remittance that he had to expect was made about six weeks before his death, "so that," to adopt Bishop Burnet's happy phrase, "his provision and journey failed both at once."

His remains were conveyed to Horsted Keynes, the parish in which he had spent his concluding years, and were interred in an ancient chancel* of the church, with no other pomp to hallow his obsequies, than the unbought attendance and inexpressive tears of the surrounding neighborhood. On his tombstone is the following simple epitaph:—

Depositum
Roberti ± Leightounj
Archiepiscopi Glasguensis
Apud Scotas
Qui objt xxv die Junij
Anno Dmj 1684
Ætatis suæ 74.

It would be impossible to hang more fra grant garlands on his tomb, than are already woven for it by Bishop Burnet. The first I shall produce, is from his preface to the life of Bishop Bedell.

"I shall not add much of the bishops that have been in that church [of Scotland], since the last re-establishment of the order; but that I have observed among the few of them, to whom I had the honor to be known particularly, as great and exemplary things as ever I met with in all ecclesiastical history; not only the practice of the strictest of all the ancient canons, but a pitch of virtue and piety, beyond what can fall under common imitation, or be made the measure of even the most angelical rank of men; and saw things in them that would look liker fair ideas, than what men clothed with flesh and blood could grow up to. But of this I will say no more, since those that are concerned are yet alive, and their character is too singular, not to w

* In this chancel, which it has lately been found necessary to take down on account of its decayed state, were some venerable tombs of the family at Broadhurst, who possessed the handsome old mansion of that name, and the patronage of the living. The whole is now transferred by purchase to another family. In the same chancel was the tomb of the archbishop's younger brother, Sir Ellis, who died only a few months before him, as appears from the inscription on his tombstone:—

Here lyeth interred the
Body of Sir Ellis Leighton, Knt.,
Who died 9th January 1684.

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make them to be as easily known, if I enlarged upon it as if I named them."*

The next is from the "History of his own Time."

"I bear still the greatest veneration for the memory of that man, that I do for any person; and reckon my early knowledge of him, which happened the year after this [Leighton's promotion to a bishopric], and my long and intimate conversation with him, that continued to his death, for twenty-three years, among the greatest blessings of my life; and for which I know I must give account to God, in the great day, in a most particular manner."

My third and last quotation shall be from his "Pastoral Care," in which, after stating that the matter of it had been the chief subject of his thoughts for more than thirty years, he goes on as follows:—

"I was formed to them by a bishop, that had the greatest elevation of soul, the largest compass of knowledge, the most mortified and most heavenly disposition, that I ever yet saw in mortal; that had the greatest parts, as well as virtues, with the perfectest humility, that I ever saw in man; and had a sublime strain in preaching, with so grave a gesture, and such a majesty, both of thought, of language, and of pronunciation, that I never once saw a wandering eye where he preached; and have seen whole assemblies often melt in tears before him; and of whom I can say with great truth, that in a free and frequent conversation with him, for above two-and-twenty years, I never knew him say an idle word, that had not a direct tendency to edification: and I never once saw him in any other temper, but that which I wished to be in, in the last moments of my life. For that pattern, which I saw in him, and for that conversation, which I had with him, I know how much I have to answer to God: and though my reflecting on that which I knew in him, gives me just cause of being deeply humbled in myself, and before God; yet I feel no more sensible pleasure in anything than in going over in my thoughts all I saw and observed in him."

Leighton was small of stature, as may be inferred from some letters of Dr. Fall† to a friend, in which he is more than once playfully denominated "the little bishop;" and one of the anecdotes inserted above, in which he contrasts himself with a corpulent person, denotes him to have been of a spare habit. To judge from his portrait, his countenance must have been a faithful interpreter of his mind; for it indicates sense in alliance with sanctity, sweetness dignified by strength, and vivacity shaded with pensiveness and tempered by devotion. Of his manners in private life we have no more exact information, than may be deduced from the foregoing narrative: but from this we may confidently pronounce, that in his general character and deportment there was a happy union of dignity and meekness; and that in him the sterling integrity of the Christian was refined, without being impaired, by secular accomplishments. Indeed, religion combining so largely as it did in Leighton, with a happy nature improved by travel, by multifarious and elegant learning, and by familiar intercourse with the politest men of the age, could not fail of forming a gentleman of a higher cast, than worldly education alone can model.

It only remains to offer some remarks on the intellectual character and attainments of Archbishop Leighton, on his genius as a writer, and on the style of his compositions.

With respect to his mental qualities, it may be safely affirmed by the most scrupulous encomiast, that he was gifted with a capacious mind, a quick apprehension, a retentive memory, a lively fancy, a correct taste, a sound and discriminating judgment. All these excellences are conspicuous in almost every page of his writings: for in Leighton's compositions there is an extraordinary evenness. One is not recruited here and there, by a striking thought or a brilliant sentence, from the fatigue of toiling through many a heavy paragraph, but "one spirit in them rules;" and while he occasionally mounts to a surpassing height, he seldom or never sinks into flatness. The reason is, that he is always master of his subject, with a clear conception of his own meaning and purpose, and a perfect command of all the subsidiary materials; and still more, that his soul is always teeming with those divine inspirations, which seem vouchsafed only from time to time to ordinary mortals.

Had the mind of Leighton been less exact and perspicacious, the rapid and multitudinous flow of his ideas would have rendered him a writer of more than common obscurity;

* The Life of Bishop Bedell was published in the year 1695, and to the passage above cited is subjoined the following note, which confirms, if confirmation be needed, its application to Archbishop Leighton: "The worthy person here meant is dead since this was put in the press; but both his name and a more particular account of him, as it well deserves a book by itself, so will perhaps be given on another occasion."

† Dr. Fall appears first in the family of Craig Hall Sir Thomas Hope's), as governor, it would seem, to a Mr. Hope, whom he accompanied to the continent. He was afterward abroad, in the same capacity, with the sons of the Marquis of Queensberry, Lord Treasurer, through whose patronage he was appointed, about the year 1682 or 1683, to be King's Historiographer, with a salary of 40*l.* sterling. On the 29th September, 1684, he was chosen Principal of the College of Glasgow, from which situation he was removed, soon after the Revolution, on declining to take the oaths. In 1671 he sends his friend Wylie a translation from the Italian of the account of "The last Conclave;" and he is supposed to be the translator of Mascardi's History of Count Fleschi's Rebellion, about the year 1670. He was evidently a great admirer of Leighton, wrote a Latin preface to the first edition of the Prælectiones and Parœneses, and took a lively interest in the publication of the Commentary on the first Epistle of Peter.

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for he was impatient of those rules of art by which theological compositions are usually confined. No man, indeed, was better acquainted with scholastic canons and dialectical artifices; but he towered above them. At the same time his argument never limps, although the form be not syllogistic, the correctness of his mind preventing material deviation from a lucid and consecutive order. There is a logical continuity of thought to be traced in his writings; and his ideas, perhaps, may not be unaptly compared to flowers in a garden, so luxuriantly overhanging trellises, as to obviate the primness and formality of straight lines, without however straying into a wantonness of confusion, that would perplex the observer's eye.

It is not to be denied, that a more scientific arrangement in Leighton's compositions would have greatly assisted the memory of his readers: and let those who come short of him in intellectual power, beware of imitating his laxity of method. The rules of art, though cramps to vigor, are crutches to feebleness. My impression is, however, that the effusions of our author's mind, disposed more artificially, would have lost in richness what they gained in precision, and the gain would have been overbalanced by the loss. From the structure and flow of his discourses, I should conjecture it to have been his custom, when he had determined to write on any subject, to ruminate on it till his mind had assumed a corresponding form and tone; after which he poured forth his conceptions on paper without pause or effort, like the irrepressible droppings of the loaded honeycomb. So imbued was his holy soul with the principles of the gospel, or so completely, I might better say, was the whole scheme of revelation amalgamated in the menstruum of his powerful intellect, that whatever he wrote on sacred subjects came forth with an easy flow, clear, serene, and limpid. In all his compositions there is a delightful consistency: nothing indigested and furbid: no dissonances of thought, no jarring positions; none of the fluctuations, the ambiguities, the contradictions which betray a penury of knowledge, or an imperfect assimilation of it with the understanding. Equally master of every part of the evangelical system, he never steps out of his way to avoid what encounters him, or to pick up what is not obvious: he never betakes himself to the covers of unfairness or ignorance; but he unfolds, with the utmost intrepidity and clearness, the topic that comes before him.

Moreover, it not a little enhances the value of his writings, that he is fully aware how far the legitimate range of human inquiry extends, and what is the boundary Divine wisdom hath affixed to man's inquisitiveness. While the half-learned theologian beats about in the dark, and vainly attempts a passage through metaphysical labyrinths, which it is he part of sober wisdom not to enter, the sagacious Leighton distinctly sees the line, beyond which speculation is folly: and in stopping at that limit he displays a promptness of decision, commensurate with his unwavering certainty in proceeding up to it.

Such a writer as Leighton was incapable of parade. He was too intent upon his subject to be choice of words and phrases, and his works discover a noble carelessness of diction, which in some respects enhances their beauty. Their strength is not wasted by excessive polishing: their glow is not impaired by reiterated touches. But, though he was little curious in culling words and compounding sentences, his language is generally apt and significant, sufficient for the grandeur of his conceptions, without encumbering them. If not always grammatically correct, it is better than mere correctness would make it; more forcible and touching; attracting little notice to itself, but leaving the reader to the full impulse of those ideas of which it is the vehicle. Leighton is great by the magnificence of thought: by the spontaneous emanations of a mind replete with sacred knowledge, and bursting with seraphic affections; by what pauseless gush of intellectual splendor, in which the outward shell, the intermediate letter, is eclipsed and almost annihilated, that full scope may be given to the mighty effulgence of the informing spirit.

Dr. Doddridge applies to his eloquence the description given by the great epic poet of the oratory of Ulysses:—

——Ὑπεα νιφάδεσσιν ἐοικότα χειμερίῃσιν

But in this, he seems to have misconceived the meaning of Homer, who compares the thronging words and forcible elocution of the Grecian hero to a storm of pelting rain and driving sleet, and not to flakes of snow descending in rapid but gentle succession.

A sweet and mellow pathos is certainly the characteristic of his style: but there is nothing in it languid and effeminate. While the suavity of his spirit flavors all his productions, the strength of his well-informed and masculine understanding makes them abundantly solid and nutritious. He is not like a pulpy reed, distilling luscious juices; he is *a rock pouring forth rivers of oil.*

Leighton never affects a concise sententiousness. He is perfectly free from that trick of antithesis, which hit the vicious taste of the day; or was tolerated under the plea that a sentiment would be more securely lodged in the memory, if the sentence which conveyed it were armed with an epigrammatic point. But his copiousness does not consist in a vain prodigality of words. It is the redundance of a full mind, venting itself that it may be refreshed, and not of a perplexed mind, painfully disembarrassing itself by endless explanations. He is not the literary mechanic, who sets himself to spin out a scanty material into a vast expanse of web, or to hammer out a pretty ingot into an immense

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surface; but his diffuseness, or rather profuseness, proceeds from the large stores he has amassed; from the broad survey of his commanding intellect; and from that acuteness which at once resolves into its elementary truths a complex proposition, and tracks a remote consequence to its principle through all its gradations. It may be safely affirmed, that there are not many theological writers, in whose volumes are more of "the seeds of things." Perhaps he is less entitled than some of his great contemporaries to the praise of being an original thinker: yet the thoughts of others become so identified in him with whatever it is that constitutes the intellectual individuality of a writer, as to issue from his mind with a new cast, bearing his own peculiar stamp and superscription. Attentive students of his works will be repaid by an abundance of excellent matter; and will never perceive symptoms of the knowledge and vigor of the writer being nearly run out. In fact, he is never exhausted, till he has exhausted the subject; and this he makes no effort to accomplish, but he stops the exudation of his flowing mind, when enough has been produced, lest he deluge instead of irrigating.

To his perfect freedom from the vanity of authorship it may partly be ascribed, that with all his knowledge and fertility of invention, Leighton is never betrayed into wearisome and subtle details. There is in him no puerile ambition of dissecting a principle into its minutest ramifications, when such elaborate precision would serve no higher end than to display the skill of the artist. He lays down the fundamentals of Christian faith and practice, with just enough of individual application to give them weight and clearness, and then leaves them to take root and fructify in the bosoms of those whom he addresses.

Neither can it have escaped the observation of one at all conversant with his writings, that it is never the purpose of his mind to make good any particular system of divinity, nor to fortify its weak positions, and set off its strong proofs and advantages. He is constantly aiming at higher matters; and shakes off with disdain the servile fetters, which would shackle the free and generous spirit of religion. Brought up in the school of rigid Calvinism, he adhered, in the judgment of his maturer years, to the tenets of the French reformer, divested however of their rigor. To say that he coincided, for the most part, with Calvin in the interpretation of scripture would be correct; but it would be most incorrect to denominate him a Calvinist, if that appellation imply an assent to a particular scheme of theology, on the authority of that famous divine. Leighton, though the humblest of mankind, was not weakly distrustful of his own powers; and therefore we never find him slavishly treading in the footsteps of predecessors. Yet, though free and independent, he is not audacious and dogmatical. His manner of handling the profound mystery of predestination reads an excellent lesson to those precipitate sciolists, who make an unqualified affirmation of that mystery, in the high Calvinistic sense, to be the test of orthodoxy, and, one might almost add, the passport to salvation;—who contrive to interweave it with every sermon and treatise;—and who, instead of building on it sublime ideas of the majesty and goodness of God, and deducing from it powerful motives to humility and holiness so treat it as to weaken the force of moral and religious obligation on the mind, and to disparage the awful sanctity of the supreme and impartial governor of mankind.

It is one of our author's excellences, that he assigns to the several parts of the system of Redemption their relative rank and importance. In unfolding the dignity of Christ, the glory of his person, and the satisfactory virtue of his death, no one can exceed him in scriptural orthodoxy and devotional feeling. Yet with him the atonement is not of such engrossing magnitude, as to overshadow the chief ends for which a piacular sacrifice was appointed: but its incalculable value, in respect to mankind, is shown to arise from its being the foundation on which the spiritual temple of God is to be rebuilt. To open a way for the return of the Holy Spirit to the world, is the grand scope and aim of the mediatorial covenant as prominently exhibited by Leighton: and its ultimate glory is shown to result from the renovation of sinners to righteousness, of which the death of Jesus Christ is in its meritorious consequence effective, by appeasing the judicial resentment of heaven, and cancelling the offender's obligation to punishment.

The points, indeed, on which his soul was constantly fixed, whence accrues such a heavenly grandeur to all his discourses, were the noble vocation of a Christian, and the height to which a regenerate soul ought to rise above sublunary objects; the nearness of death; the mysterious vastness of the Godhead; the stupendous concerns of eternity; and the blessedness resulting from close communion with the Father of Spirits, and from conformity to the pattern which Jesus Christ bequeathed to his followers, of consummate purity and virtue. When Leighton addresses himself to these matters, he does indeed utter his voice from high places; and impresses us with the idea of a man, who from an eminence beyond the region of fogs and clouds and meteors, has surveyed whatever is above and beneath, things in heaven and things upon the earth, with a vast advantage for rating justly the value of the one and of the other. He seems to have lately come down from conversing with God upon the mount, anointed and pre-eminently qualified to represent the high priest of the Christian temple; to draw aside the outward veil, and to disclose the glorious spirit of religion in its innermost sanctuary.



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It is impossible to dip into his writings, without observing with how brilliant a fancy he was endowed. They sparkle with beautiful images, which either are drawn from the magazines of scripture; or are such as would naturally present themselves to an inventive and elegant mind, furnished, as Leighton's was, with the literary products of every clime and age, and with the accumulated stores of civil and ecclesiastical erudition; and intent upon making whatever it has collected subservient to the illustration of divine truth. By his holy skill sacred learning is made to purify profane, and profane learning to elucidate and embellish sacred. The gold and silver of Egypt are moulded into vessels for the tabernacle of Jehovah; while the living waters of the sanctuary are taught to meander through fields of classic lore, imparting to their produce celestial fragrancy and virtue.

Among the just commendations of this great and good man's writings, we must not omit their extraordinary decency, resulting, no doubt, from singular purity of mind, and the more worthy of note from its being foreign to the school in which he had been educated. No coarse, indelicate metaphor, the offspring of a gross imagination, ever sullies his pages; and if it fall in his way to handle subjects which bring into view the grosser passions and appetites, of our nature, he spreads over their unseemliness such a veil of chastity, that nothing appears to draw a frown from the austerest gravity, or to put the most susceptible modesty to the blush.

Archbishop Leighton will hardly rank in the foremost line of philologists and theological critics. Yet, in general, he is a safe guide in the exposition of particular texts; and if sometimes he mistake the precise sense of the passage he discusses, still his improvement of it is so orthodox and pious, that one might be tempted to think that it is better to err with Leighton than to go right with the rest of mankind. He had carefully perused the original text of both the Old and the New Testament; and by a sober application of etymological analysis, he frequently throws light on obscure sentences of the sacred volume. From the Fathers also, of whom he was a diligent, student, as the pen-marked copies of their works in his library testify, he drew many beautiful sentiments, which are interspersed in his own lucubrations; the whole of which have a strong savor of primitive spirituality. But that which adds so peculiar a zest to his compositions, is the quality usually denominated Unction. His mouth spake out of the abundance of his heart. Instead of a dry didactic statement, which, how faultless soever in doctrine and form, will seldom beget sympathy, we have in him the libation upon the sacrifice,—the holy affections of his soul poured out on the solid products of his understanding, and imparting to them a delicious odor and irresistible penetrancy. In every page of his books there is an impassioned earnestness, a soul-subduing pathos, which make it impossible to doubt, that the impressions he strives to communicate are deeply engraven on his spirit. Indeed he does not seem so much to appeal to his readers, as unconsciously to let them into the chamber of his own soul, on which they may see the gospel traced in its native lineaments: and may recognise the loveliness of divine truth in the most perfect union, of which it is capable, with the heart and understanding of a frail and fallible mortal.

Some allusion has been dropped in this memoir to his excellence in the pulpit. Burnet, in eulogizing his preaching, pronounces it "rather too fine;" and it did undoubtedly soar above the flight of ordinary minds, or it might rather be said of minds not elevated by habits of divine contemplation. It was surprisingly free from the quaint and sectarian jargon of the day, as will be seen by comparing his printed discourses with those precious morsels, which are embalmed in a work, that came out shortly after the Revolution, and is entitled "Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence Displayed." In the sermons of Leighton there is nothing puerile, low, or ludicrous; no fantastic conceits and impertinent pleasantries; no wild interpretations of scripture and bombastic rhapsodies; no desultory and pedantic excursions. He scorned to set off his matter, or scrupled to profane it, with a tawdry dress and garish colors. His phraseology, at once sedate and noble, well becomes the ambassador of heaven; and denotes a profound veneration for the oracles of God, a pious dread of distorting their sense, and giving a human figure and color to any portion of revelation, and an ardent desire to convert thoughtless sinners, and to edify serious believers. Such were his matter and diction, with which his manner in the pulpit comported. Superior to popular applause, he had no peculiarities about his delivery; unless indeed simplicity, earnestness, and gravity, were at that time uncommon qualities. He never aimed at effect by oratorical grimace, nor strove, as was much the practice, to carry his hearers by a tempest of voice and gesture; and indeed the natural feebleness of his voice would have interdicted such exertions, had his taste permitted them. But, when he preached, the manner was in admirable harmony with the message: and so well did the majesty and beauty of his enunciation accord with the solemn truths of which he was the herald, that the congregations he addressed were subdued and enchained, as if by the magic of an unearthy eloquence.

The work, which is the crown of his posthumous glory in the universal church, is the Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Peter. It is a treasury of sound experimental divinity; and argues an extraordinary ripeness of Christian attainments. It was prob-

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ably delivered from the pulpit, and is drawn out in the familiar form of exposition: the clauses, and sometimes the emphatic words, of each text being ordinarily explained in course, and no artificial arrangement observed in discussing the several subjects introduced by the apostle. Still, the general scope and coherence of each passage are carefully kept in view; and the main truth, asserted or proved, is never lost sight of, in unfolding the particular propositions from which it is educed. This work will always class among the first of uninspired scriptures; and can never cease to constitute the admiration and delight of the Christian and the scholar. *Hinc lucem haurire est, et pocula sacra.*

Next in worth to this commentary are his expositions of "The Creed," "The Lord's Prayer," and "The Ten Commandments;" which seem to have been carefully pondered, and are of equal account as summaries of exegetical and of practical divinity. The fragment of a commentary not long brought to light, on the first eight chapters and part of the ninth of St. Matthew's gospel, has touches of his fine genius, and is imbued with his heavenly spirit: but it is decidedly inferior to that on the first epistle of Peter. It consists of little more than notes, with which he probably assisted his memory in preaching to rustic auditories, and wherein he contracts the natural size of his intellect to the puny proportions of babes. His meditations critical and practical on Psalms iv., xxxii., and cxxx., translated from the original Latin under the inspection of Dr. Doddridge; and his Expository lectures on Psalm xxxix., and on one or two other portions of Scripture, have the flavor of the parent soil, but demand no particular comment. They are sketches only, but, like the line of the painter, they betray a master-hand. The meditations, which were spoken in Latin to the Edinburgh collegians, are felicitous essays, glistening with holy animation, and are more classically adorned than the expository lectures: not, however, in a degree to unfit them for the closet of unlettered devotion.

On his Rules and Instructions for a Holy Life, which are comprised in a few pages, some strictures are necessary. It is impossible to read them without conceiving a great opinion of the sanctity of the mind from which they issued. They are the rules by which his own life were fashioned, and do not, I believe, delineate a perfection much exceeding his actual attainments. Yet they need to be read with caution, being somewhat tinged with mysticism—a disease almost peculiar to those who inhabit the highest regions, and breathe the purest atmosphere of devotion. The religion of this manual is doubtless the religion of the Bible; but then it is pushed into abstractions, in the pursuit of which an ordinary mind would be embarrassed and utterly discouraged;—abstractions which go beyond what the method of Christ and his apostles authorizes, or is compatible with the constitution of our nature, and the frame of society resulting from that constitution, It is one incomparable excellence of this religion of Jesus Christ, that it does not stand aloof, and call those who would embrace it into wilds and solitudes; but it enters our habitations, eating and drinking, in the form and with the affections of our nature; it mingles its pure and peaceful and benignant influences with all the various commerce of life; and it converts man to holiness, without displacing him from his proper sphere, or disturbing any of those relations which arise out of his civil and domestic condition. Leighton has not in these particulars followed so closely, as might have been wished, in the track of the great Author of Christianity. Perhaps it is the exclusive prerogative of a wisdom, calm and comprehensive as God's, to exhibit a system, which shall raise debased man to the highest perfection of which he is capable, without deranging the order and economy of the present world. When good men, even with the Bible before them, set themselves to draw out rules for the conduct of the soul, they are apt to overstep the simplicity and wise reserve of scripture; and, by too minute and peremptory an application of principles, which the blessed Jesus, with exemplary tenderness and prudence, left it to each individual to apply, they often bring a snare upon the conscience, relax altogether the tottering knees, and lead ardent or melancholy spirits into dangerous subtleties. I must own myself suspicious of the consequences of enhancing upon Scripture, and of constructing a model, which at first sight strikes the eye, as being something more lofty and spiritual than is set forth in the sacred records. To aim at gratuitous refinements in spirituality requires the control of a very sober judgment and a deep humility, to prevent its being injurious to sound religious practice; for there is danger of the substance of Christian piety flying off under too intense a process of sublimation. When men, instead of diligently forming themselves to that plain and palpable goodness, which it is the drift of the gospel to inculcate, aspire to something superhuman and angelical, there is reason to fear lest they rest satisfied with the attempt, though it be unprosperous. Conscience will not approach them for failing in those extraordinary efforts, which few have the courage to make, as it would if they came short of the ordinary proficiency of Christians; and, possibly, in striving to sustain themselves in regions too rare for human piety, and in chasing a chimerical perfection, they may waste that energy which, more humbly directed, would have made them approved of God and useful to mankind. When Christians attain, indeed, to this height of holiness, they become transcendent luminaries, peerless stars of the morning, who invigorate and gladden

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that lower body of the church, round which they revolve in their superior orbit. Be it far from me and from any Christian to depreciate such aims and such attainments. For our author's vindication it is fully sufficient, that the Directory* in question exhibits the scope of his own divine ambition, and not the standard by which he measured others. A mature and intelligent Christian may at any time read it with advantage; and to those who are satisfied with a religion of form and ceremony it may also be serviceable, by acquainting them with the tremendous secret, that they are strangers to the reality and power of godliness. But it would be unwise and unsafe to place it in the hands of novices, sincere but feeble converts, lest they should be utterly disheartened, and their pious aspirations be smothered in despair. Whoever is conversant with the "Imitation of Jesus Christ," that beautiful manual of devotion, which is popularly ascribed to Thomas à Kempis, will recognise, in the "Rules and Instructions for a Holy Life," much of the same spirit, and the same extreme ideas of self-exinanition and total absorption in God. Of both it must be confessed,—as Pope Innocent XII. observed of Fenelon, to whom Leighton bore no slight resemblance in the qualities of the mind and heart—that if they erred, it was through an exuberant love of God, *excessu amoris Dei*. It was the vehemence of their piety which hurried away their judgment; and the uncommon mistake of stating Christian perfection too high is beyond all dispute less momentous, than the usual error of sinking it below the scriptural standard.

In the Latin Prelections, which have been translated by Dr. Fall, the principal doctrines of the Christian faith are developed by our Author with exquisite learning, judgment, and piety. These lectures constitute a valuable series of theological instructions; and were probably delivered pretty much in the order in which they are now arranged. After showing that happiness, of which so strong a desire is implanted in the human breast, is not to be drawn from earthly fountains, he proves that an immortal nature must fetch its joys from immortal sources. Hence he is led to treat of the existence, the nature, the government of God, which he does with equal energy and sobriety; demonstrating the title such a Being possesses to the affectionate allegiance of his rational creatures, whose felicity must depend on their maintaining that place in the moral system of the universe, wherein the wise economy of the Creator hath fixed them. He then represents the extensive ruin that ensued from the defection of Adam; and goes on to the reparation achieved by Messiah, of the injury done to God by the primal sin, and of the destruction it brought upon mankind. The nature of Christian salvation is further developed, as consisting in the engrafting of vital and immortal principles in the soul by the mysterious energy of the Holy Spirit; which process constitutes the true adoption of sinners through the Savior, and is their temporal initiation to the enjoyment of life eternal Moreover he expatiates, with great beauty and emphasis, on the happiness of a life regulated by the fear of God and by the rules of the gospel; and he exhorts the students to put forth all their ardor in prosecuting that divine science, which lays open the passage to imperishable glory.

The style of these lectures justifies Burnet's commendation of our Author's latinity. Not formed upon any one particular pattern, but pure, simple, and flowing, his diction indicates a large and critical acquaintance with the best model. It is the phraseology of a man who thought in Latin, and not of one who clothed in a foreign dress ideas which were pre-conceived in his native tongue. Hence these dissertations are not mere jingle and glitter, but are solid and argumentative. Useless words and phrases are never introduced to embellish a period; nor does an apt thought ever seem to be abandoned too soon, or imperfectly evolved, from the writer being at a difficulty how to imbody it in a strange language. He moves in Roman armor with as little embarrassment as in a native garb. In these lectures, moreover, which were addressed to literary students, Leighton permits himself to quote largely from heathen authors; and one is struck with amazement at the extent of his erudition, which is not ostentatiously exposed, but comes in most appropriately wherever it can avail to throw light upon the subjects he is treating. The whole volume of profane literature seems to be unrolled before him, and is not too expanded for his ample survey. The philosophers, the poets, the historians of Rome and Athens; all the sons of science, whether Jews or Gentiles, ancient or modern; all are cited to pay the various homage, enjoined by natural reason or primeval tradition, to the being, the perfections, the natural and moral government of God; and to confirm the need of a revelation, which should capacitate mankind to recover, under a new grant and title, the honors, possessions and immunities forfeited by disobedience.

The Paræneses were short exhortations to the scholars about to graduate, and were composed in Latin. In them it is the speaker's great endeavor to guard his auditors against an overweening estimate of human learning and literary honors, and to incite them to strive after that genuine theosophy, which consists in a knowledge of God as he reveals himself to mankind in the Gospel. Each of these hortatory addresses concludes

* It ought perhaps to be mentioned that the genuineness of this Directory has been suspected: but I would venture to suggest that the impress it bears of the spirit and style of Leighton demonstrably attests its legitimacy.

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with a beautiful and appropriate prayer; and they, as well as the lectures, breathe an affectionate desire to turn the hearts of the collegians from that vain knowledge which increaseth sorrow, to that true and heavenly wisdom by which all who possess it are exalted to honor.

Dr. Fall, and not Bishop Burnet, as has been erroneously asserted, was the original editor of Leighton's works. The first of them which saw the light, was a volume of eighteen sermons, printed in London, 1692, expressly stated to be copied "from his papers written with his own hand." It is accompanied with a preface by the Editor, of which the following is an extract: "To the pious and devout reader. The Discourses, here published, are but a small taste of a great many more, that were written by the same most reverend author. A judgment will be made from the reception these meet with, concerning the publishing other discourses by the same pen. His composures in Latin (which appear to have been written and delivered when he was principal of the College of Edinburgh) are also transcribing for the press, and may in a convenient time see the light, for they need not fear it." Accordingly, in 1693, his Prælectiones Theologicæ came out in quarto, with a preface in the same language, by Dr. Fall, printed in London. The next portion of his works, produced to the public, seems to have been the "Commentary on Peter," Vol. I., 4to. York, 1693. In an advertisement prefixed to this volume, Dr. Fall alludes to the favorable reception of his former works. The second volume of this Commentary was published, London, 1694; and in the preface, Dr. Fall mentions that he has still in his hands some brief discourses by Leighton on the Epistle to the Ephesians, and also his expositions of the Decalogue, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, which might hereafter be printed. These, except the discources on the Epistles to the Ephesians, came out, Lond. 1701, 8vo., together with his two discourses, one on St. Matthew xxii. 37, 38, 39; the other on Heb. viii. 10: to which was annexed a short catechism. There was also published a volume of "Tracts," 12 mo. London, 1708: which comprised the Rules for a Holy Life, one Sermon, and the Catechism. The later editions of his works are sufficiently known.

It may gratify some readers to have the will of Archbishop Leighton, and some particulars of the disposition of his property subjoined, along with the most probable account of his ecclesiastical income. The following is the will:—

*At Broadhurst, Feb.* 17, 1683.

Being at present (thanks be to God) in my accustomed health of body and soundness of mind and memory, I do write this with my own hand, to signify, that when the day I so much wished and longed for is come, that shall set me free of this prison of clay wherein I am lodged, what I leave behind me of money, goods, or chattels, or whatsoever of any kind was called mine, I do devote to charitable uses; partly such as I have recommended particularly to my sister Mrs. Sapphira Lightmaker, and her son Master Edward Lightmaker of Broadhurst, and the remainder to such other charities as their own discretion shall think fittest. Only I desire each of them to accept of a small token of a little grateful acknowledgment of their great kindness, and trouble they have had with me for some years that I was their guest, the proportion whereof (to remove their scruple of taking it) I did expressly name to themselves, while I was with them, before the writing hereof, and likewise after I have wrote it. But they need not give any account of it to any other, the whole being left to their disposal. Neither I hope will any other friends or relations of mine take it unkind, that I bequeath no legacy to any of them, designing, as is said, so entirely to charity the whole remains. Only my books I leave and bequeath to the Cathedral of Dunblane in Scotland, to remain there for the use of the clergy of that diocess. I think I need no more, but that I appoint my said sister, Mrs. Sapphira Lightmaker of Broadhurst, and her son, Mr. Edward Lightmaker of Broadhurst, joint executors of this my will,—if they be both living at my decease, as I hope they shall; or if that one of them shall be surviving, that one is to be the sole executor of it. I hope none will raise any question or doubt about this upon any omission or informality of expression in it; being for prevention thereof as plainly expressed as it could be conceived by me. And this I declare to be the last will and testament of

ROBERT LEIGHTON.

We have already had occasion to observe, that his expenditure upon himself was frugal almost to parsimony, but from this frugality no accumulation resulted. One great object of his self-denial was to provide funds for the dissemination of sound religious learning. Accordingly, when principal of the University of Edinburgh, he presented that city with 150*l.* sterling for the support of a bursary or scholarship in philosophy. Glasgow also is indebted to this venerable man for two bursaries, which are destined to assist in the maintenance of two students, for the space of six years; the first four to be spent in philosophical pursuits, and the last two in the study of divinity: and should the student not be otherwise provided for, or wish to continue his theological studies, the magistrates and council are authorized to prolong his tenure of the studentship, for two or three additional years. In the election of scholars, the trustees are not limited to any particular description of persons; but

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they are required to present two candidates, when a bursary has become vacant, for a trial of their comparative merits; and the one reported by the examiners to be the best qualified, is to receive a presentation from the officers of the town. The annual value of each bursary is 9*l.* sterling. In one of the deeds which conferred this benefit on indigent students, 150*l.* was devised to the hospital of St. Nicholas in Glasgow, for two poor men of good report. Three paupers are now enjoying the benefit of this legacy; which produces 4*l.* 10*s.* annually for each pensioner.

To the diocess of Dunblane, which was ill provided with books, he bequeathed his valuable library; and after his removal thence, he made over for the benefit of the poor a considerable sum of money, due to him from a gentleman of that place, which money was afterward paid, and appropriated agreeably to the intentions of the benefactor.

It is not easy to ascertain the precise amount of his income, when he was Bishop of Dunblane. Most likely the revenues of the see, together with the salary accruing from the Chapel Royal at Stirling, of which the diocesan of Dunblane was Dean by right of office, did not exceed 200*l.* That bishopric was the poorest in Scotland, except those of Caithness and Argyle. Shortly after the Reformation, its rental was taken at 313*l.* per annum, in money, besides a stated allowance of grain: but then there were several livings annexed to it. In the valuation book of Aberdeenshire, the Bishop of Dunblane is styled parson of Monimusk, the reason of which is, that, at Monimusk, there was formerly a priory, the proceeds of which were assigned by James the Sixth, in 1617, to the see of Dunblane. It was this prince who augmented it with the deanery of the royal chapel, which was considerably lucrative; and he superadded the abbey of Cross-raguel in Ayrshire.

If all these golden rivulets poured into Dunblane, when Leighton was its diocesan, he would be sufficiently opulent. But it is more than probable, that several of them were dried up, or intercepted, and that only a small proportion of the nominal rental flowed into the episcopal reservoir. This proportion would be further diminished by the excessive indulgence, with which he always listened to defaulters, who pleaded poverty in excuse for not making good their payments.

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## TWO LETTERS COMMONLY REPUTED TO HAVE BEEN WRITTEN BY THE BISHOP OF DUNBLANE.

### LETTER I.

Sir: In the late conference I had with your friend, the sum of what I said was this:

1. That episcopal government, managed in conjunction with presbyters in presbyteries and synods, is not contrary either to the rule of Scripture, or the example of the primitive church, but most agreeable to both.

2. Yea, it is not contrary to that very covenant, which is pretended by so many as the main, if not the only reason of their scrupling; and for their sakes it is necessary to add this. For notwithstanding the many irregularities both in the matter and form of that covenant, and the illegal and violent ways of pressing and prosecuting of it, yet to them who remain under the conscience of its full force and obligation, and in that seem invincibly persuaded, it is certainly most pertinent, if it it be true, to declare the consistence of the even present government with that obligation. And as both these assertions, I believe, upon the exactest (if impartial and impassionate) inquiry, will be found o be in themselves true; so they are owned by the generality of the presbyterians in England; as themselves have published their opinion in print under this title, *Two Papers of proposals humbly presented to his Majesty by the Reverend Ministers of the Presbyterian Persuasion, Printed at London, Anno* 1660.

Besides other passages in these papers to the same purpose, at pages 11 and 12, are these words; "And as these are our general ends and motives, so we are induced to insist upon the form of a synodical government, conjunct with a fixed presidency; for these reasons:

1. "We have reason to believe that no other terms will be so generally agreed on, &c.

2. "It being agreeable to the Scripture and primitive government, is likeliest to be the way of a more universal concord, if even the churches on earth arrive at such a blessing; however it will be most acceptable to God, and well-informed consciences.

3. "It will promote the practice of discipline and godliness without disorder, and promote order without hindering discipline and godliness.

4. "And it is not to be silenced (though in some respects we are loath to mention it) that it will save the nation from the violation of their solemn vow and covenant, without wronging the church at all, or breaking any other oath," &c. And a little after they add,

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that the prelacy disclaimed in that covenant was, the engrossing of the sole power of ordination and jurisdiction, and exercising of the whole discipline absolutely by bishops themselves, and their delegates, chancellors, surrogates, and officials, &c., excluding wholly the pastors of particular churches from all share in it. And there is one of prime note among them, who, in a large treatise of church-government, doth clearly evince, that this was the mind both of the parliament of England, and of the assembly of Divines at Westminister, as they themselves did expressly declare it, in the admitting of the covenant, "that they understand it not to be against all episcopacy, but only against the particular frame, as it is worded in the article itself: for our principal model in England, and the way of managing of it, whatsoever is amiss (and it can be no wrong to make that supposition concerning any church on earth) or whatsoever they apprehend to be amiss, though it may be upon mistake, the brethren that are dissatisfied had possibly better acquitted their duty by free admonitions and significations of their own sense in all things, than by leaving of their station, which is the one thing that hath made the breach (I fear) very hard to cure, and in human appearance near to incurable: but there is much charity due to them, as following the dictates of their own conscience: and they owe, and I hope, pay the same back again to those that do the same in another way: and whatsoever may be the readiest and happiest way of reuniting those that are mutually so minded, the Lord reveal it to them in due time." This one word I shall add, that this difference should arise to so great a height, may seem somewhat strange to any man that calmly considers, that there is in this church no change at all, neither in the doctrine nor worship, no nor in the substance of the discipline itself: but when it falls on matters easily inflammable, how little a spark, how great a fire will kindle?

Because every one hath not the book, I have transcribed here Mr. Baxter's own words. *Bax. of Church Government*, P. III., c. i., p. 276:—

"An Episcopacy desirable for the reformation and peace of the churches. A fixed president *durante vitâ*, pp. 297, 330. But some will say, we are engaged against all prelacy by covenant, and therefore can not yield to so much as you do without perjury. Ans. That this is utterly untrue, I thus demonstrate:—

1. "When that covenant was presented to the assembly with the bare name of prelacy joined to popery, many grave and reverend divines desired that the word prelacy might be explained, because it was not all episcopacy they were against, and thereupon the following concatenation in the parenthesis was given by way of explication in these words: That is church-government by archbishops, bishops, their chancellors and commissaries, deans and chapters, archdeans, and all the other ecclesiastical officers depending on that hierarchy. By which it appears that it was only the English hierarchy, or frame, that was covenanted against, and that which was then existent that was taken down.

2. "When the House of Lords took the covenant, Mr. Thomas Coleman, that gave it them, did so explain it, and profess that it was not their intent to covenant against all episcopacy, and upon this explication it was taken; and certainly the parliament was most capable of giving the due sense of it, because it was they that did impose it.

3. "And it could not be all episcopacy that was excluded, because a parochial episcopacy was at the same time used and approved commonly here in England.

4. "And in Scotland they had used the help of visiters for the reformation of their churches, committing the care of a country or circuit to some one man, which was as high a sort of episcopacy, at least as any I am pleading for. Besides they that had moderators in all their synods, which were temporary bishops.

5. "Also the chief divines of the late assembly at Westminister, that recommended that covenant to the nations, have professed their own judgments for such a moderate episcopacy as I am here defending, and therefore never intended the exclusion of this by covenant."

After he adds, "As we have prelacy to beware of, so we have the contrary extreme to avoid, and the church's peace (if it may be) to procure; and as we must not take down the ministry, lest it prepare men for episcopacy, so neither must we be against any profitable exercise of the ministry, or desirable order among them, for fear of introducing prelacy." Thus far Baxter's own words.

There is another that hath writ a treatise on purpose, and that zealous and strict enough, touching the obligation of the league and covenant, under the name of Theophilus Timorcus. And yet therein it is expressly asserted, that "however, at first, it might appear that the parliament had renounced all episcopacy, yet upon stricter inquiry, it was evident to the author, that that very scruple was made by some members in parliament, and resolved (with the consent of their brethren in Scotland) that the covenant was only intended against prelacy as then it was in being in England, leaving a latitude for episcopacy," &c.

It would be noted that when that covenant was framed, there was no episcopacy at all in being in Scotland, but in England only; so that the extirpation of that frame only could then be meant and intended. Likewise it would be considered, that though there is in Scotland at present the name of dean, and chapter, and commissaries, yet that none of those at all do exercise any part of the dis

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cipline under that name, neither any other, as chancellor or surrogate, &c., by delegation from bishops, with a total exclusion of the community of presbyters from all power and share in it, which is the great point of difference betwixt that mode and this with us, and imports so much as to the main of discipline. I do not deny that the generality of the people, yea even of ministers in Scotland, when they took the covenant, might likewise understand that article as against all episcopacy whatsoever, even the most moderate, especially if it should be restored under the express name of bishops and archbishops; never considering how different the nature, and model, and way of exercising it may be, though under the same names, and that the due regulating of the thing is much more to be regarded than either the retaining or altering of the name. But though they did not then consider any such thing, yet certainly it concerns them now to consider it, when it is represented to them, that not only the words of the oath itself do very genuinely consist with such a qualified and distinctive sense, but that the very composers or imposers of it, or a considerable part of them, did so understand and intend it. And unless they make it appear that the episcopacy now in question with us in Scotland is either contrary to the word, or to that mitigated sense of their own oath, it would seem more suitable to Christian charity and moderation, rather to yield to it as tolerable, at least, than to continue so inflexibly fast to their first mistakes and excessive zeal, as for love of it to divide from their church, and break the bond of peace.

It may likewise be granted, that some learned men in England, who refused to take the covenant, did possibly except against that article of it, as signifying the total renunciation and abolition of all episcopacy; and seeing that was the real event and consequent of it, and they having many other strong and weighty reasons for refusing it, it is no wonder that they were little curious to inquire what passed amongst the contrivers of it, and what distinction or different senses either the words of that article might admit, or those contrivers might intend by them. And the truth is, that besides many other evils, the iniquity and unhappiness of such oaths and covenants lie much in this, that being commonly framed by persons that, even among themselves, are not fully of one mind, but have their different opinions and interests to serve (and it was so even in this,) they are commonly patched up of so many several articles and clauses, and those too of so versatile and ambiguous terms, that they prove most wretched snares, thickets of briers and thorns to the consciences of those that are engaged in them, and matters of endless contentions and disputes among them about the true sense and intendment, and the tie and obligements of those doubtful clauses, especially in some such alterations and revolutions of affairs as always may, and often do, even within few years follow after them; for the models and productions of such devices are not usually long-lived. And whatsoever may be said for their excuse in whole or in part, who, in yieldance to the power that pressed it, and the general opinion of this church at that time, did take that covenant in the most moderate and least schismatical sense that the terms can admit; yet, I know not what can be said to clear them of a very great sin, that not only framed such an engine, but violently imposed it upon all ranks of men, not ministers and other public persons only, but the whole body and community of the people, thereby engaging such droves of poor ignorant persons, to they know not what, and, to speak freely, to such a hodge-podge of various concernments, religious and civil, as church discipline and government, the privileges of parliament and liberties of subjects, and condign punishment of malignants, things hard enough for the wisest and learnedest to draw the just lines of, and to give plain definitions and decisions of them, and therefore certainly as far off from the reach of poor country people's understanding, as from the true interests of their souls; and yet to tie them by a religious and sacred oath either to know all these, or to contend for them blindfold without knowing them, can there be instanced a greater oppression and tyranny over consciences than this? Certainly they that now govern in this church can not be charged with anything near or like unto it; for whatsoever they require of intrants to the ministry, they require neither subscriptions nor oaths of ministers already entered, and far less of the whole body of the people; and it were ingenuously done to take some notice of any point of moderation, or whatsoever else is really commendable even in those we account our greatest enemies, and not to take any part in the world for the absolute standard and unfailing rule of truth and righteousness in all things.

But oh, who would not long for the shadows of the evening, and to be at rest from all these poor childish trifling contests!

P. S. Whatsoever was the occasion of copying out the passages cited in this paper and of adding these few thoughts that then occurred touching that subject, I would have neither of them understood as intended any way to reflect upon or judge other churches where this government is otherwise exercised; but what is here said is only *argumentum ad hominem*, and particularly adapted to the persons, and notions, and scruples we have to do withal in this church. And though this is designed to come to very few hands, yet I wish that what is here represented were by some better way brought to the notice of such as know least of it and

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need it most, that, if it be possible, their extreme fervor might be somewhat allayed by this consideration, that this very form of government, which is so hateful to them, is by the presbyterians of the neighbor kingdom accounted a thing, not only tolerable, but desirable: and I might add, that upon due inquiry, the reformed churches abroad will be found in a great part much of the same opinion; yea, I am not afraid to say yet further, that I think there is good reason to believe, that it were not only lawful for these that now govern in this church, but if prejudice hindered not, might prove expedient and useful for the good of the church itself, that they did use in some instances a little more authority than they do, and yet might still be very far off from proud and tyrannical domination, never applying their power to obstruct what is good, but to advance it, and not at all against the truth, but always for it, and while they do so, the atheism and profaneness that abounds can not reasonably be imputed to the nature of the government, as too commonly it is by some, but rather to the schism that is made by withdrawing and dividing from it; for there is not a greater enemy in the world to the power of religion than the wranglings and bitter contentions, that are caused about the external forms of it. Εἰρήνη φίλη, εἰρήνη φίλη, ἡπότε ἡμᾶς κατέλιπες, as Nazianzen pathetically begins one of his orations for peace. I confess I have sometimes wondered to see some wise and good men, after all that can be said to them, make so great reckoning of certain metaphysical exceptions against some little words and formalities of difference in the government, and set so little value upon so great a thing as is the peace of the church. Oh, when shall the loud and harsh noises of our debates be turned to the sweeter sound of united prayers for this blessed peace, that we might cry with one heart and voice to the God of peace, who alone can give it, *Pacem te poscimus omnes:* and if we be real supplicants for it, we would beware of being the disappointers of our own desires, and of obstructing the blessing we pray for, and therefore would mainly study a temper receptive of it, and that is, great meekness and charity; and certainly whatsoever party or opinion we follow in this matter, the badge by which we must be known to the followers of Jesus Christ is this, that we love one another, and that law unquestionably is of divine right, and therefore would not be broken by bitter passion and revilings, and rooted hatreds one against another, for things about which the right is in dispute betwixt us; and however that be, are we Christians? Then doubtless the things wherein we agree are incomparably greater than these wherein we disagree, and therefore in all reason should be more powerful to unite us, than the other to divide us. But to restrain myself, and stop here,—if we love both our own and the church's peace, there be two things I conceive we should most carefully avoid, the bestowing too great zeal upon small things, and too much confidence of opinion upon doubtful things: it is a mad thing to rush on hard and boldly in the dark, and we all know what kind of person it is of whom Solomon says, *That he rages and is confident.*

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## LETTER II.

Sir: The question betwixt us, is not concerning bishops governing absolutely by themselves and their delegates, but concerning bishops governing in conjunction with presbyters in presbyteries and synods; of which we affirm, that it is neither contrary to the Scriptures, nor the example of the primitive church, but most agreeable to both: if any think otherwise, let them produce their evidences of Scripture and antiquity. If they say, it is not enough to make such a form lawful, that it is not contrary to Scripture, but there ought to be an express command or rule in Scripture to warrant it, they will sure be so just, as to be subject to the same law themselves. Let them then produce such an express command or rule for their own model of kirk-sessions, presbyteries, synods provincial and national, and a commission of the kirk in their several dependancies and subordinations for the ordinary and constant government and exercise of discipline in the church, and the necessary changing of the moderators in these meetings, excepting only that of the kirk-session, wherein the minister is constantly to moderate; for without such an express rule as this, a bishop or fixed president may very well consist with that whole frame they contend for; and it is really and actually so at this present in this church, and they stand so much the rather obliged to bring a clear command for these judicatories, and their subordinations, because they affirm them to be of unquestionable divine right, and the very kingdom of Christ upon earth, and the only lawful and absolutely necessary government of the Christian church, whereas the asserters of other forms do not usually speak so big. If they shall say, they are not against a fixed president or bishop, or call him what you will (for to contest about names, especially in so grave a matter, is trivial and childish), but that the question is about their power, then we beg that it may be so. Let that be all the question betwixt us, and then we hope the controversy will be quickly ended; for we trust we shall be found not at all desirous to usurp or effect any undue power, but rather to abate of that power which is reasonable, and to conform even to primitive episcopacy, than that a schism should con-

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tinue in this church upon that score. But be it supposed, that bishops do stretch their power somewhat beyond their line, let all the world judge, whether ministers are for that engaged to leave their station and withdraw from those meetings of the church, which themselves approve of, for the exercise of discipline, yea and (as many of them have done) to separate from the public worship, and whole communion of the church, because of some degree of wrong done them (as they think in that point of power), or whether they had not sufficiently acquitted themselves, and discharged their consciences by free declaring of their opinion concerning that matter, and modestly desiring the redress of it; and patiently waiting for it, though it be not presently redressed, and continuing in the performance of their own duty to their power, though others above them or about them, do transgress theirs, or seem at least to them to do so; otherwise, if we think ourselves obliged for everything that is, or that we judge, faulty in other persons, or in the frame of things, to relinquish either the communion of it, or our station in it, what will there be but endless swarms of separations and divisions in any church under the sun?

But there is one thing in this business of ours that sticks after all the rest: the covenant. As to that, waiving all the irregularities of it, though so many and so great, that, in the judgment of divers, both wise and good men, they seem to annul the obligation of it, suppose it still to bind all that took it, and suppose likewise, that the present episcopacy in this church is that same that was abjured in that covenant; yet the article relating thereto obliges each one only to this, to endeavor within their calling and station, if such an episcopacy shall be introduced and continued against their will. But the truth is, if men would have the patience to inquire into it, and consider the thing without prejudice and partiality, this our episcopacy will be found not to be the same with that abjured in that covenant; for that is the government of bishops and archbishops absolutely by themselves and their delegates, chancellors, archdeacons, officials, &c., as it is expressed in the very words of the article, and was on purpose so expressed, to difference that frame from other forms of episcopacy, and particularly from that which is exercised by bishops jointly with presbyters in presbyteries and synods, and that is it which is now used in this church. And that the presbyterians in England do generally take notice of this difference, and to that degree, as to account the one model contrary to the covenant, and the other not contrary to it, but very well agreeing with it, is a thing that none can deny, nor any that uses diligence to inquire can be ignorant of, for it is clear in divers treatises extant in print. These things, to my best discerning, are truths; and if they be indeed so, I am sure are pertinent truths, toward the healing of our sad divisions; but if any like to be contentious, I wish I could say of this church, we have no such custom: but this certainly may be said, that there is no custom doth more disedify the churches of God, and less become the followers of the Prince of Peace. I shall only add one word which I am sure is undeniable, and I think is very considerable, that he that can not join with the present frame of this church, could not have lived in the communion of the Christian church in the time of the first most famous general assembly of it, the Council of Nice, yea (to go no higher up, though safely I might), he must as certainly have separated from the whole catholic church in the days of the holy bishop and martyr Cyprian upon this very scruple of the government, as Novatus did upon another occasion.

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# DR. DODDRIDGE'S PREFACE.*

When Mr. Wilson undertook to publish several pieces of Archbishop Leighton, from the manuscripts in which they had so long lain concealed, having heard of the high esteem I have long professed for the writings of that excellent person, he entreated me that I would revise them, and if I approve the publication, would introduce them into the world by a recommendatory preface. The last of these requests I absolutely refused, knowing how very unworthy I am to pretend, by my suffrage, to add anything to the reputation and acceptance of what came from the pen of so eminently great and good a man: and the more I know of him, and of myself, the more deeply sensible I must be of this. But with the former request I cheerfully complied, though my various and important business would have furnished a very plausible excuse for declining it. I apprehended that these pieces were not very large, and I knew that, like all the other remains of our incomparable author, they were not designed for the press; so that it was probable they were written in a very hasty manner, considering how well he knew the value of time, and how entirely he was superior to popular applause in all his compositions for the pulpit, as most of these were. The numberless errors which I had observed in the first edition of all his *English* works, by which the sense of many passages is absolutely destroyed, and that of scores and hundreds very much obscured, made me the more ready to attempt the paying this little tribute of respect to his memory, which no words or actions can fully express; and I was morally certain, that whatever came from such a pen would be so entertaining and improving, that I could not fail of being immediately and abundantly rewarded for whatever pains it might cost me to prepare it for the Public.

When these manuscripts came to my hands, I found new reasons to be satisfied with the task I had undertaken, which indeed was welcome to me in proportion to the degree in which I perceived it must be laborious. The papers which were sent me were copies of others, which I suppose were transcribed from short-hand notes, which some skilful writer had haply taken from the archbishop's mouth. They were beyond comparison more inaccurate than those of his printed works, which are most remarkably so; and yet they contained such inimitable traces of sweet natural eloquence, and of genuine and lively piety, as speak the author far more certainly, than the most exact resemblance of what was known to be his handwriting could possibly have done.

Besides a large collection of letters, of which I shall afterward speak, the papers consisted of his meditations and expositions on *Psalm* xxxix., on part of *Rom.* xii., and the whole sixth of *Isaiah*. On this last sublime and instructive portion of Scripture, there were three distinct expositions, delivered, as I suppose, at different places; the latter being, so far as I could judge, supplemental to the former, yet so that additions were made to almost every verse, and sometimes the same things which had been said before, expressed in a different manner. I judged it consistent with the strictest fidelity owing to the works of so illustrious a person (which absolutely forbade my adding or diminishing anything), to divide them, and incorporate them into one whole; which could not possibly be done, without transcribing the pieces, omitting those passages in the former, that were afterward more copiously or more correctly expressed in the latter, and inserting here and there a line or two, by way of connexion, to prevent those disagreeable chasms which would otherwise have defaced much of its beauty. For the rest the reader may assure himself, that if (which

* Drawn up for the Edition of Archbishop Leighton's Expository Works, in two volumes, octavo, published by David Wilson, Edinburgh, 1748.

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I can not doubt) these papers came genuine into my hand, they are now entirely so, in every sentence, and in every clause; for in those very few places where the sense was to me absolutely unintelligible, and the construction incurably ungrammatical, I chose rather to drop such imperfect fragments, than by uncertain additions of my own, to run the risk of imputing to the good archbishop what I was not sure he ever wrote. Had these fragments contained hints of any things curious in criticism, history, or controversy of any kind, I would have published them apart, at the end of these volumes: but as they were very few, and, like the rest of his writings, entirely of a devotional and practical nature, I thought it would have been a formality nearly bordering upon impertinence, to have collected and inserted them in such a manner.

The *Ethico-critical Meditations*, on the iv., xxxii., and cxxx. *Psalms*, abound with so many charming sentiments and expressions, that I could not but desire the *English* reader should share in part of the pleasure they had given me. I have therefore taken care they should be faithfully translated, and have reviewed the version with as much accuracy as my other engagements would allow. It is indeed impossible to transfuse the inimitable elegance and strength of the original into any translation; but he who is incapable of the pleasure of using that, will, I hope, be glad to enjoy the benefit of such eminently pious reflections, though under the disadvantage of a dress much less beautiful and ornamental.

When this part of the design was executed, I was insensibly, by an ambiguity of expression in the proposals printed at Edinburgh, led into another labor, much greater than I at first imagined it would have proved, I mean that of correcting the quarto edition of the incomparable commentary upon the first epistle of *Peter*, which I may venture to pronounce the most faulty piece of printing I ever remember to have seen in any language. At first, I intended only to have noted those gross mistakes which quite pervert that which any person of common penetration must see to have been the original sense, and yet are taken no notice of in erroneous table of *errata*. But afterward considering what an embarrassment it is to common readers, to see commas, colons, and periods, placed almost in a promiscuous disorder, without any regard to their proper signification, which is the case here, at least in every ten lines, I determined to go over the whole, pen in hand, and correct every page as I would have done a proof from the press.

While I was thus employed, I observed that the confusion which many have complained of in the archbishop's method, and which I myself really thought matter of some just complaint too, was frequently the consequence of omitting the numeral marks, which should denote the subordination of heads, and this where some of them are inserted, as if on purpose to increase the perplexity. And it also very frequently results from the neglect of giving a proper view at first of the method proposed, and which was worst of all, in not a few places, from placing the number of the head, instead of the head itself. This perhaps was done with design in the first copy, to save the trouble of writing it over again; but it is extremely inconvenient to the reader, as it most naturally leads him to mistake the first sentence of the enlargement, for the head it is intended to illustrate.

This is a remark which is applicable to many of our author's sermons; and I wish it had been more constantly attended to in that valuable edition of them published by Mr. Wilson at Edinburgh two years ago, in comparison of which, nevertheless, it is certain that neither of the former are to be named. I thought it no unwarrantable liberty at all, but a high point of justice, to supply with my pen what is so evidently deficient, and, I hope I shall not be condemned for venturing, as I was expressly desired to do, here and there to exchange a Scots word or phrase for an English one, certainly of the same signification, and more generally understood. I thought that to have distinguished all these corrections by different characters, crotchets, or inverted commas, would have injured the beauty of the impressions, and might have looked like a little affectation of making a vain parade of what I have done. If any are curious enough to desire exactly to know it, they may get surer information by comparing this edition with the former, by which they may judge of the little, but as I thought, very necessary freedoms taken with the manuscript pieces. And if any perceive, as I suppose most observant readers that make the comparison, will, that the Commentary upon Peter now reads in a much rounder, clearer, and pleasanter manner than it before did, they will only reflect how much a multitude of little negligences and errors, each of them seeming in itself minutely and inconsiderably small, may affect the beauty, character, and use of a work in which they are found.

On the whole, the preparing these volumes for the press hath generally taken up a little of my time in the intervals of other business, daily for several months; but I am far from repenting the labor I have bestowed upon it. The delight and edification which I have found in the writings of this *wonderful man*, for such I must deliberately call him, would have been a full equivalent for my pains, separate from all prospect of that effect which they might have upon others For truly I know not that I have ever spent a quarter of an hour in reviewing any of them, but even amidst that interruption which a critical examination of the copy would naturally give, I have felt some im-

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pressions which I could wish alway to retain. I can hardly forbear saying, as a considerable philosopher and eminent divine, with whom I have the honor of an intimate correspondence and friendship, said to me in a letter long ago,* and when my acquaintance with our author's works was but beginning, "There is a spirit in Archbishop *Leighton* I never met with in any human writings: nor can I read many lines in them without being moved."

Indeed it would be difficult for me to say where, but in the sacred oracles, I have ever found such heart-affecting lessons of simplicity and humility, candor and benevolence, exalted piety, without the least tincture of enthusiasm, and an entire mortification to every earthly interest, without any mixture of splenetic resentment. Nor can I ever sufficiently admire that artless manner in which he lays open, as it were, his whole breast to the reader, and shows, without seeming to be at all conscious of it himself, all the various graces that can adorn and ennoble the Christian, running like so many veins of precious ore in the rich mine where they grew. And hence, if I mistake not, is that wonderful energy of his discourses, obvious as they seem, unadorned as they really are, which I have observed to be owned by persons of eminent piety in the most different ranks, and amid all the variety of education and capacity that can be imagined. As every eye is struck by consummate beauty, though in the plainest dress, and the sight of such an object impresses much more than any labored description of complexion, features, or air, or any harangue on the nicest rules of proportion which could come into consideration; so, in the works of this *great adept in true Christianity*, we do not so much hear of goodness, as see it in its most genuine traces; see him a living image of his Divine Master, for such indeed his writings show, I had almost said demonstrate him to have been, by such internal characters as surely a bad man could not counterfeit, and no good man can so much as respect.

Where the matter is so remarkably excellent, a wise and pious reader will not be over-solicitous about the style; yet I think he will find it, in these compositions, far above any reasonable contempt or censure. When I consider what the prevailing taste was a century ago in this respect, I have often wondered at the many true beauties of expression that occur in these pieces, and the general freedom from those false and fanciful ornaments, if they are to be called ornaments, which occur in contemporary authors. On the whole, the style wonderfully suits the sentiments; and however destitute of the flights of oratory, has such a dignity and force mingled with that simplicity, which is to be sure its chief characteristic; so that on the whole, it has often reminded me of that soft and sweet eloquence of Ulysses, which Homer* describes as falling like flakes of snow; and if I might be allowed to pursue the similitude, I could add, like that, it penetrates deep into the mind too, and tends to enrich and fructify it.

It is chiefly the practical preacher that shines in these lectures, yet it seems to me, that the judicious expositor will also appear, and appear most to the most competent judges. There is a sort of criticism on the sacred writings, which none but an eminently good man can attain; and if I am at all capable of judging concerning it, it remarkably reigns here. We find indeed little of that laborious sifting of words and syllables, in which some have worn out so much time and pains, if not to no purpose at all (for I will not assert that), at least to purposes very low, and inconsiderable, when compared with those which our author pursues and attains. The reader, will, I think, find great light poured on many very difficult passages, especially in the First Epistle of Peter, in a very masterly manner, and often by a few weighty words. But these hints are generally very short; for the good author appears to have lopped off everything as superfluous, which did not immediately tend to make his readers better; or rather to have had a heart so entirely possessed with this desire, that nothing else ever offered itself to his view. Whatever of an ornamental kind is to be found in these practical parts of the work, which certainly constitute more than six sevenths of the whole, appears to have been quite unlabored and unsought; but it conduces much to our entertainment, and I hope in its consequence to our improvement, that the author had naturally a very fine imagination; the consequence of which is, that his works abound with a charming variety of beautiful figures, springing up most naturally from his subjects, and so adding some graces of novelty, to thoughts in themselves most obvious and common.

On the whole, I can not but hope that God will be pleased to bless the publication of these pieces, in these circumstances, as an occasion of reviving a sense of religion, and promoting the interest of true Christianity. It has appeared to me a memorable event, that when the extreme modesty of Archbishop Leighton had been inexorable to all the entreaties of his many friends, to print something during his life, so many of his precious remains should with such solicitude be gleaned up after death, and some of them more than threescore years after it; and that they should be read with such high esteem and delight, as it is plain many of them have been, by persons of the most different denominations throughout Great Britain. I am very sensible of it as an honor done to me in the course of divine Providence, that the task

*April 10, 1740. The Rev. Dr. Henry Miles, F. R. S.

* Καὶ ἔπεα νιφάδεσσιν ἐοικότα χειμερίῃσιν.—Il. iii. v. 222.

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I have here executed should so very unexpectedly be devolved upon me. I have no property at all in the work, nor the least secular interest in its success: what I have done was entirely the result of love to the author's memory, and concern for the public good; but I shall be gloriously rewarded, if the labor I have bestowed upon it, be the occasion of promoting those great ends which animated the discourses and actions of the holy man, who has now dwelt so long among the blessed inhabitants of that world after which he so ardently aspired, while yet among mortals. And let me be permitted to add, that I have some secret hope this publication, in these circumstances, may, among other good effects, promote that spirit of catholicism, for which our author was so remarkable, and extend it among various denominations of Christians, in the northern and southern parts of our island. If the sincerest language or actions can express the disposition of the heart, it will be here apparent, that a diversity of judgment, with regard to episcopacy, and several forms both of discipline and worship connected with it, have produced in my mind no alienation, no indifference toward *Archbishop Leighton*, nor prevented my delighting in his works, and profiting by them. In this respect I trust my brethren in Scotland will, for their own sake, and that of religion in general, show the like candor. On the other side, as I have observed with great pleasure and thankfulness how much many of the established clergy in this part of Britain are advancing in moderation toward their dissenting brethren, I am fully assured they will not like these excellent pieces the worse, for having passed through my hand. It is truly my grief, that anything should divide me from the fullest communion with those to whom I am united in bonds of as tender affection as I bear to any of my fellow-Christians. And it is my daily prayer, that God will, by his gentle but powerful influence on our minds, mutually dispose us more and more for such a further union, as may most effectually consolidate the protestant cause, establish the throne of our gracious sovereign, remove the scandal our divisions have occasioned, and strengthen our hands in those efforts by which we are attempting, and might then, I hope, more successfully attempt, the service of our common Christianity. In the meantime, I desire most sincerely to bless God for any advances that are made toward it; and I can not forbear to illustrate and confirm my thoughts on this head, by inserting the elegant words of a most worthy member of the Church of England, well known in the learned world, as I have lately had the honor of receiving them from his own pen. I conceal his name, and therefore hope it is no violation of the laws of friendship, to insert at large a passage from a familiar letter, which, if it warms my reader's breast as it did mine, will be not only an entertainment, but a blessing to many, and which is as suitable a conclusion of this preface, as if it had been written in that view. "I am glad," says he, "that Christianity begins to be so well understood and taught by so many men of parts and learning in all sects, the fruits of which appear in a candor and charity unknown to all ages of the church, except the primitive, I had almost said, the apostolic age. Does not this give you a prospect, though perhaps still very distant, of the completion of the famous prophecy that speaks of the *lion and the lamb lying down together* in the kingdom of the Messiah? Lions there have been hitherto in all churches, but too many fierce, greedy, and blood-thirsty lions, though often disguised like lambs, and some lambs there have been, simple enough to think it expedient for the flock, to assume the habit and terror of lions; but I hope they now begin to undeceive themselves, and to consider Christianity as intending to bring back the world to that state of innocence which it enjoyed before the fall, when in one and the same paradise, to use the words of *Milton*,

> ——— 'Frisking played
> All beasts of th' earth, since wild and of all chase,
> In wood or wilderness, forest or den.
> Sporting the lion ramped, and in his paw
> Dandled the kid.'———

To attain this happy state," continues this amiable writer, "all Christians should unite their endeavors, and instead of looking out for and insisting upon points of difference and distinction, seek for those only in which they *do* or *may* agree. They may at least *sow the seeds* of peace and unity, though they should not live to *reap the fruits* of it in this world. *Blessed are the peacemakers*, says the Prince of Peace, *for they shall be called the children of God.* An appellation infinitely more honorable than that of pastor, bishop, archbishop, patriarch, cardinal, or pope, attended with a recompense infinitely surpassing the richest revenues of the highest ecclesiastical dignity." I join my hearty wishes and prayers with those of my much-esteemed friend, that we may all more and more deserve this character, and attain this its reward.

P. DODDRIDGE.

*Northampton, April* 26, 1748.

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# PRACTICAL COMMENTARY

UPON THE

# FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF SAINT PETER

## CHAPTER I.

VERSE 1. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

THE grace of God in the heart of man, is a tender plant in a strange unkindly soil; and therefore can not well prosper and grow, without much care and pains, and that of a skilful hand, and which hath the art of cherishing it: for this end hath God given the constant ministry of the world to his church, not only for the first work of conversion, but also for confirming and increasing of his grace in the hearts of his children.

And though the extraordinary ministers of the gospel, the apostles, had principally the former for their charge—the converting of unbelievers, Jews and Gentiles, and so the the planting of churches, to be after kept, and watered by others (as the apostle intimates, 1 Cor. iii. 6), yet did they not neglect the other work of strengthening the grace of God begun in the new converts of those times, both by revisiting them, and exhorting them in person, as they could, and by the supply of their writing to them when absent.

And the benefit of this extends (not by accident, but by the purpose and good providence of God) to the church of God in all succeeding ages.

This excellent epistle (full of evangelical doctrine and apostolical authority) is a brief, and yet very clear summary both of the consolations and instructions needful for the encouragement and direction of a Christian in his journey to heaven, elevating his thoughts and desires to that happiness, and strengthening him against all opposition in the way, both that of corruption within, and temptations and afflictions from without.

The heads of doctrine contained in it are many, but the main that are most insisted on, are these three. *faith*, *obedience*, and *patience*; to establish them in believing, to direct them in doing, and to comfort them in suffering. And because the first is the groundwork and support of the other two, this first chapter is much occupied with persuading them of the truth of the mystery which they had received and did believe, viz., their redemption and salvation by Christ Jesus; that inheritance of immortality bought by his blood for them, and the evidence and stability of their right and title to it.

And then he uses this belief, this assurance of the glory to come, as the great persuasive to the other two, both to holy obedience, and constant patience, since nothing can be too much either to forego or undergo, either to do or to suffer, for the attainment of that blessed state.

And as, from the consideration of that object and matter of the hope of believers, he encourages to patience, and exhorteth to holiness in this chapter in general, so, in the following chapters, he expresses more particularly, both the universal and special duties of Christians, both in doing and suffering, often setting before those to whom he wrote, the matchless example of the Lord Jesus, and the greatness of their engagement to follow him.

In the first two verses, we have the *inscription* and *salutation*, in the usual style of the apostolic epistles.

The *inscription* hath the *author* and the *address*—from whom, and to whom. The *author* of this *epistle* is designated by his *name*—Peter; and his *calling*—an apostle.

We shall not insist upon his name, that it was imposed by Christ, or what is its signification: this the evangelists teach us, John i. 42; Matt. xvi. 18.

By that which is spoken of him in divers passages of the gospel, he is very remarka-

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ble among the apostles, both for his graces, and his failings; eminent in zeal and courage, and yet stumbling oft in his forwardness, and once grossly falling. And these by the providence of God being recorded in scripture, gave a check to the excess of Rome's conceit concerning this apostle. Their extolling and exalting him above the rest, is not for his cause, much less to the honor of his Lord and master Jesus Christ, for he is injured and dishonored by it; but it is in favor of themselves. As Alexander distinguished his two friends, that the one was a friend of Alexander, the other a friend of the *king*, the preferment which they give this apostle, is not in good will to Peter, but in the desire of *primacy*. But whatsoever he was, they would be much in pain to prove Rome's right to it by succession. And if ever it had any such right, we may confidently say, it has forfeited it long ago, by departing from St. Peter's footsteps, and from his faith, and retaining too much those things wherein he was faulty: namely,

His unwillingness to hear of, and consent to, Christ's sufferings,—his *master, spare thyself*, or *far be it from thee*,—in those they are like him; for thus they would disburden and exempt the church from the cross, from the real cross or afflictions, and, instead of that, have nothing but painted, or carved, or gilded crosses; these they are content to embrace, and worship too, but can not endure to hear of the other. Instead of the cross of affliction, they make the *crown* or *mitre* the badge of their church, and will have it known by prosperity, and outward pomp; and so turn the church militant into the church triumphant, not considering that it is Babylon's voice, not the church's, *I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow.*

Again, they are like him in his saying on the mount at Christ's transfiguration, when he knew not what he said, *It is good to be here:* so they have little of the true glory of Christ, but the false glory of that monarchy on their seven hills: *It is good to be here*, say they.

Again, in their undue striking with the sword, not the enemies, as he, but the faithful friends and servants of Jesus Christ. But to proceed.

We see here Peter's office or title,—*an apostle;* not *chief bishop.* Some in their glossing have been so impudent as to add that beside the text; though in chap. v. 4, he gives that title to Christ alone, and to himself only *fellow elder;* and here, not *prince of the apostles*, but *an apostle*, restored and re-established after his fall, by repentance, and by Christ himself after his own death and resurrection. (See John xxi.) Thus we have in our apostle a singular instance of human frailty on the one side, and of the sweetness of divine grace on the other. Free and rich grace it is indeed, that forgives and swallows up multitudes of sins, of the greatest sins, not only sins before conversion, as to St. Paul, but foul offences committed after conversion, as to David, and to this apostle; not only once raising them from the dead, but when they fall, stretching out the same hand, and raising them again, and restoring them to their station, and comforting them in it by his *free spirit*, as David prays; not only to cleanse polluted clay, but to work it into vessels of honor, yea, of the most defiled shape to make the most refined vessels, not vessels of honor of the lowest sort, but for the highest and most honorable services, vessels to bear his own precious name to the nations; making the most unworthy and the most unfit, fit by his grace to be his messengers.

*Of Jesus Christ.*] Both as the beginning and the end of his apostleship, as Christ is called *Alpha* and *Omega;* chosen and called by him, and called to this—to preach him, and salvation wrought by him.

*Apostle of Jesus Christ.*] Sent by him and the message no other than his name, to make that known. And what this apostleship was then, after some extraordinary way, befitting these first times of the gospel, the ministry of the word in ordinary is now, and therefore an employment of more difficulty and excellency than is usually conceived by many, not only by those who look upon it, but even of those who are exercised in it;—to be ambassadors for the greatest of kings, and upon no mean employment, that great treaty of peace and reconcilement betwixt him and mankind. V. 2 Cor. v. 20.

This epistle is directed to the *elect*, who are described here, by their *temporal* and by their *spiritual* conditions. The one hath very much dignity and comfort in it; the other hath neither, but rather the contrary of both; and therefore the apostle, intending their comfort, mentions the one but in passing, to signify to whom particularly he sent his epistle; but the other is that which he would have their thoughts dwell upon, and therefore he prosecutes it in his following discourse. And if we look to the order of the words, their temporal condition is but interjected; for it is said, *To the elect*, first, and then, *To the strangers scattered*, &c. And he would have this as it were drowned in the other—*According to the foreknowlege of God the Father.*

That those dispersed strangers who dwelt in the countries here named, were Jews, appears, if we look to the foregoing epistle, where the same word is used, and expressly appropriated to the Jews. James i. 1. St. Peter in Gal. ii. is called *an apostle of the circumcision*, as exercising his apostleship most toward them; and there is in some passages of this epistle, somewhat which, though belonging to all Christians, yet hath, in the strain and way of expression, a particular fitness to the believing Jews, as being particularly verified in them, which was spoken of their nation, chap. ii. 9, 10.

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Some argue from the name, strangers, that the Gentiles are here meant, which seems not to be; for proselyte Gentiles were indeed called strangers in Jerusalem, and by the Jews; but were not the Jews strangers in these places—Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia?—Not strangers dwelling together in a prosperous, flourishing condition, as a well-planted colony, but *strangers of the dispersion*, scattered to and fro. *Their dispersion* was partly, first by the Assyrian captivity, and after that by the Babylonish, and by the invasion of the Romans; and it might be in these very times increased by the believing Jews flying from the hatred and persecution raised against them at home.

The places here mentioned, through which they were dispersed, are all in Asia. So Asia here, is Asia the *lesser*. Where it is to be observed, that some of those who heard St. Peter, Acts ii. 9, are said to be of those regions. And if any of the number then converted were among these dispersed, the comfort was no doubt the more grateful from the hand of the same apostle by whom they were first converted; but this is only conjecture. Though divine truths are to be received equally from every minister alike, yet it must be acknowledged, that there is something (we know not what to call it) of a more acceptable reception of those who at first were the means of bringing men to God, than of others; like the opinion some have of physicians whom they love.

The apostle comforts these strangers of this dispersion, by the spiritual union which they obtained by *effectual calling;* and so calls off their eyes from their outward, dispersed, and despised condition, to look above that, as high as the spring of their happiness, the *free love* and *election* of God. *Scattered* in the countries, and yet gathered in God's election, chosen or picked out; strangers to men among whom they dwelt, but *known* and *foreknown* to God; removed from their own country to which men have naturally an unalterable affection, but *heirs* made of a better (as follows, ver. 3, 4); and having within them the evidence both of eternal election and of that expected salvation, the *spirit of holiness* (ver. 2). At the best, a Christian is but a stranger here, set him where you will, as our apostle teacheth after; and it is his privilege that he is so; and when he thinks not so, he forgets and disparages himself: he descends far below his quality, when he is much taken with anything in this place of his exile.

But this is the wisdom of a Christian, when he can solace himself against the meanness of his outward condition, and any kind of discomfort attending it, with the comfortable assurance of the love of God, that he hath called him to holiness, given him some measure of it, and an endeavor after more; and by this may he conclude, that he hath ordained *him* unto salvation. If either he is a stranger where he lives, or as a stranger deserted of his friends, and very near stripped of all outward comforts, yet may he rejoice in this, that the eternal, unchangeable love of God, which is from everlasting to everlasting, is sealed to his soul. And O, what will it avail a man to be compassed about with the favor of the world, to sit unmolested in his own home and possessions, and to have them very great and pleasant, to be well moneyed, and landed and befriended, and yet estranged and severed from God, not having any token of his special love?

*To the elect.*] The apostle here denominates all the Christians to whom he writes, by the condition of true believers, calling them *elect* and *sanctified*, &c., and the apostle St. Paul writes in the same style in his epistles to the churches. Not that all in these churches they were such indeed, but because they professed to be such, and, by that their profession and calling as Christians, they were obliged to be such: and as many of them as were in any measure true to their calling and profession were really such. Besides, it would seem not unworthy of consideration, that in all probability there would be fewer false Christians, and the number of true believers would be usually greater, in the churches in those primitive times, than now in the best reformed churches: because there could not then be many of them that were from their infancy bred in the Christian faith, but the greatest part were such as, being of years of discretion, were, by the hearing of the gospel, converted from paganism and Judaism to the Christian religion first, and made a deliberate choice of it; to which there were at that time no great outward encouragements, and therefore the less danger of multitudes of hypocrites, which, as vermin in summer, breed most in the time of the church's prosperity. Though no nation or kingdom had then universally received the faith, but rather hated and persecuted it, yet, were there even then among them, as the writings of the apostles testify, false brethren, and inordinate walkers, and men of corrupt minds, earthly-minded, and led with a spirit of envy and contention and vain-glory.

Although the question that is moved concerning the necessary qualifications of all the members of a true visible church can no way (as I conceive) be decided from the inscriptions of the epistles, yet certainly they are useful to teach Christians and Christian churches what they ought to be, and what their holy profession requires of them, and sharply to reprove the gross unlikeness and inconformity that is in the most part of men to the description of Christians. As there be some that are too strait in their judgment concerning the being and nature of the visible church, so certainly the greatest part of churches are too loose in their practice.

From the dissimilitude betwixt our churches



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and thence we may make this use of reproof, that if an apostolical epistle were to be directed to us, it ought to be inscribed, to the ignorant, profane, malicious, &c. As he, who at the hearing of the gospel read, said, "Either this is not the gospel, or we are not Christians," so, either these characters, given in the inscription of these epistles, are not true characters, or we are not true Christians.

VER. 2. Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

IN this verse we have their *condition* and the *causes* of it.—Their condition *sanctified* and *justified;* the former expressed by *obedience*, the latter by *sprinkling of the blood of Christ*. The causes, 1. *Eternal election*, 2. *The execution of that decree*, their *effectual calling*, which (I conceive) is meant by *election* here, the selecting them out of the world, and joining them to the fellowship of the children of God. So John xv. 19. The former, *election*, is particularly ascribed to God the Father, the latter to the Holy Spirit; and the *blood of Jesus Christ*, the Son of God, is here assigned as the cause of their *justification;* and so the whole trinity concurring dignify them with this their spiritual and happy estate.

First, I shall discourse of these separately, and then of their connexion.

1. Of the state itself, and 1, of *justification*, though named last.

This *sprinkling* has respect to the rite of the legal purification by the sprinkling of blood; and that appositely, for these rites of sprinkling and blood did all point out this blood and this sprinkling, and exhibited this true ransoms of souls, which was only shadowed by them.

The use and end of sprinkling were *purification* and *expiation*, because sin merited death, and the pollutions and stains of human nature were by sin. Such is the pollution, that it can be no manner of way washed off but by blood. (Heb. ix. 22.) Neither is there any blood able to purge from sin except the most precious blood of Jesus Christ, which is called (Acts xx. 28) the *blood of God*.

That the stain of sin can be washed off only by blood, intimates that it merits death; and that no blood, but that of the Son of God, can do it, intimates that this stain merits eternal death; and it had been our portion, except the death of the eternal Lord of life had freed us from it.

*Filthiness* needs sprinkling; *guiltiness* (such as deserves death) needs sprinkling of blood; and the death it deserves being everlasting death, the blood must be the blood of Christ, the eternal Lord of life, dying to free us from the sentence of death.

The soul (as the body) hath its life, its health, its purity, and the contrary of these, —its death, diseases, deformities, and impurity—which belong to it as to their first subject, and to the body by participation.

The soul and body of all mankind are stained by the pollution of sin. The impure leprosy of the soul is not a spot outwardly but wholly inward; hence, as the corporal leprosy was purified by the sprinkling of blood, so is this. Then, by reflecting, we see how all this that the apostle St. Peter expresseth is necessary to justification. 1. Christ, the mediator betwixt God and man, is God and man. 2. A mediator not only interceding, but also satisfying (Eph. ii. 16). 3. This satisfaction doth not reconcile us, unless it be applied: therefore there is not only mention of blood, but the *sprinkling* of it. The Spirit by faith sprinkleth the soul, as with hyssop, wherewith the sprinkling was made: this is it of which the prophet speaks (Isa. lii. 15), *So shall he sprinkle many nations;* and which the apostle to the Hebrews prefers above all legal sprinklings (chap. ix. 12, 13, 14), both as to its duration and as to the excellency of its effects.

Men are not easily convinced and persuaded of the deep stain of sin, and that no other laver can fetch it out but the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Some who have moral resolutions of amendment, dislike at least gross sins, and purpose to avoid them, and it is to them cleanness enough to reform in those things; but they consider not what becomes of the guiltiness they have contracted already, and how that shall be purged, how their natural pollution shall be taken away. Be not deceived in this, it is not a transient sigh, or a light word, or a wish of *God forgive me;* no, nor the highest current of repentance, nor that which is the truest evidence of repentance, amendment; it is none of these that purify in the sight of God, and expiate wrath; they are all imperfect and stained themselves, can not stand and answer for themselves, much less be of value to counterpoise the former guilt of sin. The very tears of the purest repentance, unless they be sprinkled with this blood, are impure; all our washings without this are but washings of the blackmoor—it is labor in vain. Jer. ii. 22; Job ix. 30, 31. There are none truly purified by the blood of Christ who do not endeavor after purity of heart and conversation; but yet it is the blood of Christ by which they are all made fair, and there is no spot in them. Here it is said, *elect to obedience;* but because that obedience is not perfect, there must be sprinkling of the blood too. There is nothing in religion further out of nature's reach, and out of its liking and believing, than the doctrine of redemption by a Savior, and a crucified Savior,—by Christ, and by his blood, first shed on the cross in his suffering, and then sprinkled on the soul by his spirit. It is easier to make men sensible of the necessity of repentance and amendment of life (though that-

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is very difficult), than of this purging by the sprinkling of this precious blood. Did we see how needful Christ is to us, we should esteem and love him more.

It is not by the hearing of Christ and of his blood in the doctrine of the gospel; it is not by the sprinkling of water, even that water which is the sign of this blood without the blood itself and the sprinkling of it. Many are present where it is sprinkled, and yet have no portion of it. Look to this, that this blood be sprinkled on your souls, that the destroying angel may pass by you. *There is a generation* (not some few, but a generation) deceived in this; they are their own deceivers, *pure in their own eyes.* (Prov. xxx. 12.) How earnestly doth David pray, *Wash me, purge me with hyssop!* Though bathed in tears (Psal. vi. 6) that satisfied not: *Wash thou me.* This is the honorable condition of the saints, that they are purified and consecrated unto God by this sprinkling; yea, they have on *long white robes washed in the blood of the Lamb.* There is mention indeed of *great tribulation*, but there is a double comfort joined with it. 1. They come out of it; that tribulation hath an end. And, 2. They pass from that to glory; for they have on the robe of *candidates, long white robes washed in the blood of the Lamb*, washed white in blood. As for this blood, it is nothing but purity and spotlessness, being stained with no sin, and besides hath that virtue to take away the stain of sin, where it is sprinkled. *My well-beloved is white and ruddy*, saith the spouse; thus in his death, ruddy by bloodshed, white by innocence and purity of that blood.

Shall they then, who are purified by this blood, return to live among the swine, and tumble with them in the puddle? What gross injury were this to themselves, and to that blood by which they are cleansed! They who are chosen to this *sprinkling*, are likewise chosen to *obedience.* This blood purifieth the heart; yea, this blood *purgeth our consciences from dead works to serve the living God.* (Heb. ix. 14.)

2. Of their sanctification. *Elect unto obedience.*] It is easily understood to whom. When obedience to God is expressed by the simple absolute name of obedience, it teacheth us that to him alone belongs absolute and unlimited obedience, all obedience by all creatures. It is the shame and misery of man, that he hath departed from this obedience, that we are become *sons of disobedience;* but grace, renewing the hearts of believers, changeth their natures, and so their names, and makes them *children of obedience* (as afterward in this chapter). As this obedience consists in the receiving Christ as our Redeemer, so also at the same time as our lord or king; there is an entire rendering up of the whole man to his obedience. This obedience, then, of the only-begotten Jesus Christ, may well be understood not as *his actively*, as Beza interprets it, but *objectively* as 2 Cor. x. 5. I think here it is contained, yea chiefly understood to signify that *obedience* which the apostle in the epistle to the Romans calls the *obedience of faith*, by which the doctrine of Christ is received (and so Christ himself), which uniteth the believing soul to Christ—he sprinkles it with his blood, to the remission of sin—and which is the root and spring of all future obedience in the Christian life.

By *obedience*, sanctification is here intimated; it signifies then, both habitual and active obedience, renovation of heart, and conformity to the divine will. The mind is illuminated by the Holy Ghost, to know and believe the divine will; yea, this faith is the great and chief part of obedience. (See Rom. i. 8.) The truth of the doctrine is first impressed on the mind; hence flows out pleasant obedience, and full of love; hence all the affections, and the whole body, with its members, learn to give a willing obedience, and submit unto God; whereas before they resisted him, being under the standard of Satan.

This obedience, though imperfect, yet hath a certain (if I may so say) *imperfect perfection.* It is universal in three manner of ways. 1. In the subject. 2. In the object. 3. In the duration: the whole man is subjected to the whole law, and that constantly and perseveringly.

The first universality is the cause of the other: because it is not in the tongue alone, or in the hand, &c., but has its root in the heart; therefore it doth not wither as the grass, or flower lying on the surface of the earth, but it flourishes because rooted. And it embraces the whole law, because it arises from a reverence it has for the lawgiver himself. Reverence, I say, but tempered with love; hence, it accounts no law nor command little, or of small value, which is from God, because he is great and highly esteemed by the pious heart; no command hard (though contrary to the flesh), because all things are easy to love. There is the same authority in all, as St. James divinely argues; and this authority is the golden chain of all the commandments, which if broken in any link, all falls to pieces.

That this threefold perfection of obedience is not a picture drawn by fancy, is evident in David, Psalm cxix., where he subjects himself to the whole law; his feet, ver. 105; his mouth, ver, 13; his heart, ver. 11; the whole tenor of his life, ver. 24. He subjects himself to the whole law, ver. 6, and he professes his constancy therein, in verses 16 and 33. *Teach me the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end.*

II. We have the causes of the condition above described.

*According to the foreknowledge of God the Father.*] The exactest knowledge of things is, to know them in their causes; it is then

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an excellent thing, and worthy of their endeavors who are most desirous of knowledge, to know the best things in their highest causes; and the happiest way of attaining to this knowledge, is, to possess those things, and to know them in experience. To such persons the apostle here speaks, and sets before them the excellency of their spiritual condition, and leads them to the causes of it.

Their state is, that they are *sanctified* and *justified:* the nearest cause of both these is, Jesus Christ. He is made unto them both *righteousness* and *sanctification:* the sprinkling of his blood purifies them from guiltiness, and quickens them to obedience.

The appropriating or applying cause comes next under consideration, which is the *holy*, and *holy-making* or *sanctifying spirit*, the author of their selection from the world, and effectual calling unto grace.

The source of all the appointing or decreeing cause, is *God the Father:* for though they all work equally in all, yet, in order of working, we are taught thus to distinguish and particularly to ascribe the first work of eternal election to the first person of the blessed trinity.

*In or through sanctification.*] For to render it, *elect to the sanctification*, is strained: so then I conceive this election is their effectual calling, which is by the working of the Holy Spirit: see 1 Cor. i. 26–28, where *vocation* and *election* are used in the same sense: *Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh*, &c., *but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.* It is the first act of decree of election; the beginning of its performance in those that are elected; and it is in itself a real separating of men from the profane and miserable condition of the world, and an appropriating and consecrating of a man unto God; and therefore, both in regard of its relation to election, and in regard of its own nature, it well bears that name. See Rom. viii. 28, 30; Acts ii. 47, and xiii. 48: John xv. 19.

*Sanctification* in the narrower sense as distinguished from *justification*, signifieth the inherent holiness of a Christian, or his being inclined and enabled to perform the *obedience* mentioned in this verse; but it has here a sense more large, and is co-extended with the whole work of renovation; it is the severing or separating of men to God, by his Holy Spirit, drawing them unto him; and so it comprehends justification (as here) and the first working of faith, by which the soul is justified, through its apprehending and applying the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

*Of the Spirit.*] The word calls men externally, and by that external calling prevails with many to an external receiving and professing of religion; but if it be left alone it goes no farther. It is indeed the means of sanctification and effectual calling, as John xvii. 17, *Sanctify them through thy truth;* but this it doth when the spirit, which speaks in the word, works in the heart, and causes it to hear and obey. The spirit or soul of a man is the chief and the first subject of this work, and it is but slight false work that begins not there; but the *spirit* here is to be taken for the spirit of God, the efficient, rather than for the spirit of man, the subject of this sanctification. And therefore our Savior in that place prays to the Father, *that he would sanctify his own by that truth;* and this he doeth by the concurrence of his Spirit with that word of truth which is the life and vigor of it, and makes it prove *the power of God unto salvation to them that believe.* It is a fit means in itself, but it is a prevailing means only when the spirit of God brings it into the heart. It is a sword, and *sharper than a two-edged sword* fit to divide, yea, *even to the dividing of soul and spirit;* but this it doth not, unless it be in the Spirit's hand, and he apply it to this cutting and dividing. The word calls, but the spirit draws, not severed from that word, but working in it, and by it.

It is very difficult work to draw a soul out of the hands and strong chains of Satan, and out of the pleasing entanglements of the world, and out of its own natural perverseness, to yield up itself unto God—to deny itself, and live to him, and in so doing, to run against the main stream, and the current of the ungodly world without, and corruption within.

The strongest rhetoric, the most moving and persuasive way of discourse, is all too weak: the tongue of men or angels can not prevail with the soul to free itself, and shake off all that detains it. Although it be convinced of the truth of those things that are represented to it, yet still it can and will hold out against it, and say, *Non persuadebis etiamsi persuaseris.*

The hand of man is too weak to pluck any soul out of the crowd of the world, and to set it in among the select number of believers. Only the Father of Spirits hath absolute command of spirits, viz., the souls of men, to work on them as he pleaseth, and where he will. This powerful, this sanctifying Spirit knows no resistance; works sweetly, and yet strongly; it can come into the heart, whereas all other speakers are forced to stand without. That still voice within persuades more than all the loud crying without; as he that is within the house, though he speaks low, is better heard and understood, than he that shouts without doors.

When the Lord himself speaks by this his Spirit to a man, selecting and calling him out of the lost world, he can no more disobey than Abraham did, when the Lord spoke to him after an extraordinary manner, to depart from his own country and kindred: *Abraham departed as the Lord had spoken to him*, Gen. xii. 4. There is a secret, but very powerful virtue in a word, or look, or touch of this Spirit upon the soul, by which it is

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forced not with a harsh, but a pleasing violence, and can not choose but follow it, not unlike that of Elijah's mantle upon Elisha. How easily did the disciples forsake their callings and their dwellings to follow Christ!

The Spirit of God draws a man out of the world by a sanctified light sent into his mind, 1. Discovering to him, how base and false the sweetness of sin is, which withholds men and amuses them, that they return not; and how true and sad the bitterness is that will follow upon it; 2. Setting before his eyes the free and happy condition, *the glorious liberty of the sons of God*, the riches of their present enjoyment, and their far larger and assured hopes for hereafter; 3. Making the beauty of Jesus Christ visible to the soul; which straightway takes it so, that it can not be stayed from coming to him, though its most beloved friends, most beloved sins, lie in the way, and hang about it, and cry, Will you leave us so? It will tread upon all to come within the embraces of Jesus Christ, and say with St. Paul, *I was not disobedient to (or unpersuaded by) the heavenly vision.*

It is no wonder that the godly are by some called singular and precise; they are so, singular, a few selected ones picked out by God's own hand, for himself: *Know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself*, Psalm iv. 3. *Therefore*, saith our Savior, *the world hates you, because I have chosen you out of the world.* For the world lies in unholiness and wickedness—is buried in it; and as living men can have no pleasure among the dead, neither can these elected ones among the ungodly: they walk in the world as warily as a man or woman neatly apparelled would do among a multitude that are all sullied and bemired.

Endeavor to have this sanctifying Spirit in yourselves; pray much for it; for his promise is passed to us, that *He will give this Holy Spirit to them that ask it.* And shall we be such fools as to want it, for want of asking? When we find heavy fetters on our souls, and much weakness, yea, averseness to follow the voice of God calling us to his obedience, then let us pray with the Spouse, *Draw me.* She can not go nor stir without that drawing; and yet, with it, not only goes, but runs. *We will run after thee.*

Think it not enough that you hear the word, and use the outward ordinances of God, and profess his name; for many are thus called, and yet but a few of them are chosen. There is but small part of the world outwardly called, in comparison of the rest that is not so, and yet the number of the true elect is so small, that it gains the number of these that are called, the name of *many.* They who are in the visible church, and partake of external vocation, are but like a large list of names (as in civil elections is usual), out of which a small number is chosen to the dignity of true Christians, and invested into their privilege. Some men in nomination to offices or employments, think it a worse disappointment and disgrace to have been in the list, and yet not chosen, than if their names had not been mentioned at all. Certainly it is a greater unhappiness to have been *not far from the kingdom of God* (as our Savior speaks), and miss of it, than still to have remained in the farthest distance; to have been at the mouth of the haven (the fair havens indeed), and yet driven back and shipwrecked. Your labor is most preposterous; you seek to ascertain and make sure things that can not be made sure, and that which is both more worth, and may be made surer than them all, you will not endeavor to make sure. Hearken to the apostle's advice, and at length set about this in earnest, *to make your calling and election sure.* Make sure this election, as it is here (for that is the order), your effectual calling sure, and that will bring with it assurance of the other, the eternal election and love of God toward you, which follows to be considered.

*According to the foreknowledge of God the Father.*] *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning*, saith the apostle James. Acts xv. 18. He sees all things from the beginning of time to the end of it, and beyond to all eternity, and from all eternity he did foresee them. But this foreknowledge here relates peculiarly to the elect. *Verba sensus in sacra scriptura denotant affectus*, as the Rabbins remark. So in man, Psal. lxvi., *If I see iniquity;* and in God, Psal. i. 6, *For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous*, &c. And again, Amos iii. 2, *You only have I known of all the families of the earth*, &c. And in that speech of our Savior, relating it as the terrible doom of reprobates at the last day, *Depart*, &c., *I know you not, I never knew you.* So St. Paul, Rom. vii. 15, *For that which I do, I allow* [Gr. *know*] *not.* And Beza observes that γινώσκειν is by the Greeks sometimes taken for *decernere, judicare;* thus some speak, to *congnosce* upon a business. So then this foreknowledge is no other than that eternal love of God, or decree of election, by which some are appointed unto life, and being foreknown or elected to that end, they are predestinate to the way to it. *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren.* Rom. viii. 29.

It is most vain to imagine a foresight of faith in men, and that God in the view of that faith, as the condition of election itself, as it is called, has chosen them: for, 1. Nothing at all is *futurum*, or can have that imagined futurition, but as it is, and because it is decreed by God to be; and, therefore (as says the Apostle St. James, in the passage before cited), *Known unto God are all his works*, because they are his works in time, and his purpose from eternity. 2. It is most absurd to give any reason of Divine

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will without himself. 3. This supposition easily solves all the difficulty which the apostle speaks of; and yet he never thought of such a solution, but runs high for an answer, not to satisfy cavilling reason, but to silence it, and stop its mouth: for thus the apostle argues, Rom. ix. 19, 20: *Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault; for who hath resisted his will? Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?* Who can conceive whence this should be, that any man should believe, unless it be given him of God? And if given him, then it was his purpose to give it him; and if so, then is evident that he had a purpose to save him; and for that end he gives faith: not therefore purposes to save, because man shall believe. 4. This seems cross to these Scriptures, where they speak of the subordination, or rather co-ordination, of those two: as here, *foreknown* and *elect*, not because of obedience, or sprinkling, or any such thing, but to obedience and sprinkling which is by faith. So God predestinated, not because he foresaw men would be conformed to Christ, but that they might be so. Rom. viii. 29, *For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate.* And the same order is observable, Acts ii. 47, *And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.* Also xiii. 48, *And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.*

This foreknowledge, then, is his eternal and exchangeable love; and that thus he chooseth some, and rejecteth others, is for that great end, to manifest and magnify his mercy and justice: but why he appointed this man for the one, and that man for the other, made Peter a vessel of this mercy, and Judas of wrath, this is even so, because it seemed good to him. This, if it be harsh, yet is apostolic doctrine. *Hath not the potter* (saith St. Paul) *power over the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?* This deep we must admire, and always, in considering it, close with this: *O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!*

III. The connexion of these we are now for our profit to take notice of; that *effectual calling* is inseparably tied to this eternal *foreknowledge* or *election* on the one side, and to *salvation* on the other. These two links of the chain are up in heaven in God's own hand; but this middle one is let down to earth into the hearts of his children, and they, laying hold on it, have sure hold on the other two, for no power can sever them. If, therefore, they can read the characters of God's image in their own souls, those are the counter-part of the golden characters of his love, in which their names are written in the book of life. Their believing writes their names under the promises of the revealed book of life, the Scriptures, and so ascertains them, that the same names are in the secret book of life which God hath by himself from eternity. So that finding the stream of grace in their hearts, though they see not the fountain whence it flows, nor the ocean into which it returns, yet they know that it hath its source, and shall return to that ocean which ariseth from their eternal election, and shall empty itself into that eternity of happiness and salvation.

Hence much joy ariseth to the believer: this tie is indissoluble, as the agents are, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit: so are *election*, and *vocation*, and *sanctification*, and *justification*, and *glory*. Therefore, in all conditions, believers may, from a sense of the working of the Spirit in them, look back to that election, and forward to that salvation; but they that remain unholy and disobedient, have as yet no evidence of this love; and therefore can not, without vain presumption and self-delusion, judge thus of themselves, that they are within the peculiar love of God. But in this, *Let the righteous be glad, and let them shout for joy, all that are upright in heart.*

It is one main point of happiness, that he that is happy doth know and judge himself to be so; this being the peculiar good of a reasonable creature, it is to be enjoyed in a reasonable way; it is not as the dull resting of a stone, or any other natural body in its natural place; but the knowledge and consideration of it is the fruition of it, the very relishing and tasting its sweetness.

The perfect blessedness of the saints is awaiting them above; but even their present condition is truly happy, though incompletely, and but a small beginning of that which they expect. And this their present happiness is so much the greater the more clear knowledge and firm persuasion they have of it. It is one of the pleasant fruits of the godly, *to know the things that are freely given them of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 12. Therefore the apostle, to comfort his dispersed brethren, sets before them a description of that excellent spiritual condition to which they are called.

If *election*, *effectual calling*, and *salvation*, be inseparably linked together, then, by any one of them a man may lay hold upon all the rest, and may know that his hold is sure: and this is that way wherein we may attain, and ought to seek, that comfortable assurance of the love of God. Therefore *make your calling sure*, and by that, your *election;* for that being done, this follows of itself. We are not to pry immediately into the decree, but to read it in the performance. Though the mariner sees not the pole-star, yet the needle of the compass which points to it, tells him which way he sails: thus the heart that is touched with the loadstone of Divine love, trembling with godly fear, and yet still looking toward God by fixed believing, points at the love of election, and tells the soul that its course is heavenward, toward the haven of eternal rest. He that loves may be sure he was loved first; and he that chooses God for his delight

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and portion may conclude confidently that God hath chosen him to be one of those that shall enjoy him, and be happy in him for ever; for that our love and electing of him is but the return and repercussion of the beams of his love shining upon us.

Find thou but within thee sanctification by the Spirit, and this argues, necessarily, both justification by the Son, and the election of God the Father. *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.* 1 John iv. 13. It is a most strange demonstration, *ab effectu reciproco:* he called those he hath elected; he *elected* those he called. Where this sanctifying Spirit is not, there can be no persuasion of this eternal love of God: they that are *children of disobedience* can conclude no otherwise of themselves but that they are the *children of wrath.* Although, from present unsanctification, a man can not infer that he is not elected; for the decree may, for a part of man's life, run (as it were) under ground; yet this is sure, that the estate leads to death, and unless it be broken, will prove the black line of reprobation. A man hath no portion among the children of God, nor can read one word of comfort in all the promises that belong to them, while he remains unholy. Men may please themselves in profane scoffing at the holy Spirit of grace, but let them withal know this, that that holy Spirit, whom they mock and despise, is that Spirit *who seals men to the day of redemption.* Ephes. iv. 30.

If any pretend that they have the Spirit, and so turn away from the straight rule of the holy Scriptures, they have a spirit indeed, but it is a fanatical spirit, the spirit of delusion and giddiness; but the Spirit of God, that leads his children in the way of truth, and is for that purpose sent them from heaven to guide them thither, squares their thoughts and ways to that rule whereof it is author, and that word which was inspired by it, and sanctifies them to obedience. *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* 1 John ii. 5.

Now this Spirit which sanctifieth, and sanctifieth to obedience, is within us the evidence of our election, and the earnest of our salvation. And whoso are not sanctified and led by this Spirit, the apostle tells us what is their condition. Rom. viii. 9. *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.*

Let us not delude ourselves: this is a truth, if there be any in religion; they who are not made saints in the state of grace shall never be saints in glory.

The stones which are appointed for that glorious temple above are hewn and polished, and prepared for it here; as the stones were wrought and prepared in the mountains for building the temple at Jerusalem.

This is God's order: Psalm lxxxiv. 12. He gives *grace* and *glory.* Moralists can tell us, that the way to the temple of honor is through the temple of virtue. They that think they are bound for heaven in the ways of sin have either found a new way untrodden by all that are gone thither, or will find themselves deceived in the end. We need not then that poor shift for the pressing of holiness and obedience upon men, to represent it to them as the meriting cause of salvation. This is not at all to the purpose, seeing that without it the necessity of holiness to salvation is pressing enough; for holiness is no less necessary to salvation, than if it were the meriting cause of it; it is as inseparably tied to it in the purpose of God. And in the order of performance, godliness is as certainly before salvation as if salvation did wholly and altogether depend upon it, and were in point of justice deserved by it. Seeing, then, there is no other way to happiness but by holiness, no assurance of the love of God without it, take the apostle's advice; study it, seek it, follow earnestly after holiness, *without which no man shall see the Lord.*

*Grace unto you and peace be multiplied.*] It hath always been a civil custom among men, to season their intercouse with good wishes one for another; this the apostles use in their epistles in a spiritual divine way, suitable to their holy writings. It well becomes the messengers of *grace* and *peace*, to wish both, and to make their salutation conform to the main scope and subject of their discourse. The Hebrew word of salutation we have here—*Peace*, and that which is the spring both of this and all good things, in the other word of salutation used by the Greeks—*Grace.* All right rejoicing and prosperity, and happiness, flow from this source, and from this alone, and are sought elsewhere in vain.

In general, this is the character of a Christian spirit to have a heart filled with *blessing*, with this sweet good-will and good-wishing to all, especially to those who are their brethren in the same profession of religion. And this charity is a precious balm, diffusing itself in the wise and seasonable expressions of it, upon fit occasions; and those expressions must be cordial and sincere, not like what you call court holy-water, in which there is nothing else but falsehood, or vanity at the best. This manifests men to be the sons of blessing, and of the ever-blessed God, the father of all blessing, when in his name they bless one another: yea, our Savior's rule goes higher, to *bless those that curse them*, and urges it by that relation to God as their Father, that in this they may resemble him: *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.*

But in a more eminent way it is the duty of pastors to bless their people, not only by their public and solemn benediction, but by daily and instant prayers for them in secret. And the great *Father, who seeth in secret, will reward them openly.*

They are to be ever both endeavoring and

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wishing their increase of knowledge and all spiritual grace, in which they have in St. Paul a frequent pattern.

They who are messengers of this *grace*, if they have experience of it, it is the oil of gladness that will dilate their heart, and make it large in love and spiritual desires for others, especially their own flocks.

Let us consider, 1. The matter of the apostle's desire for them—*grace and peace*. 2. The measure of it—that it may *be multiplied*.

1*st*. The matter of the apostle's desire, *Grace*. We need not make a noise with the many school-distinctions of *grace*, and describe in what sense it is here to be taken: for no doubt it is all-*saving grace* to those dispersed brethren, so that in the largest notion which it can have that way, we may safely here take it.

What are *preventing grace*, *assisting grace*, *working* and *co-working grace* (as we may admit these differences in a sound sense), but divers names of the same effectual saving grace, in relation to our different estate? as the same sea receives different names from the different parts of the shore it beats upon. First, it prevents and works; then it assists and prosecutes what it hath wrought: *He worketh in us to will and to do*. But the whole sense of saving grace, I conceive is comprehended in these two. 1. Grace in the fountain, that is, the peculiar love and favor of God. 2. Grace in the streams, the fruits of this love (for it is not unempty, but a most rich and liberal love), *viz*.. all the grace and spiritual blessings of God bestowed upon them whom he hath freely chosen. The love of God in itself can neither diminish nor increase, but it is multiplied, or abounds in the manifestation and effects of it. So then, to desire grace to be multiplied to them, is to wish to them the living spring of it, that love which can not be exhausted, but is ever flowing forth, and instead of abating, makes each day richer than the preceding.

And this is that which should be the top and sum of Christian desires—to have, or want any other thing indifferently, but to be resolved and resolute in this, to seek a share in this grace, the free love of God, and the sure evidences of it within you, the fruit of holiness, and the graces of his Spirit. But the most of us are otherwise taken up: we will not be convinced how basely and foolishly we are busied, though in the best and most respected employments of the world, so long as we neglect, our noblest trade of growing rich in grace, and the comfortable enjoyment of the love of God. Our Savior tells us of *one thing needful*, importing that all other things are comparatively unnecessary, by works, and mere impertinencies; and yet in these we lavish out our short and uncertain time; we let the other stand by till we find leisure. Men, who are altogether profane, think not on it at all. Some others possibly deceive themselves thus, and say When I have done with such a business in which I am engaged, then I will sit down seriously to this, and bestow more time and pains on these things, which are undeniably greater and better, and more worthy of it. But this is a slight that is in danger to undo us. What if we attain not to the end of that business, but end ourselves before it? Or if we do not, yet some other business may step in after that. Oh then, say we, that must be despatched also. Thus, by such delays, we may lose the present opportunity, and in the end, our own souls.

Oh! be persuaded it deserves your diligence, and that without delay, to seek somewhat that may be constant enough to abide with you, and strong enough to uphold you in all conditions, and that is alone this free grace and love of God. While many say, *Who will show us any good?* set you in with David in his choice, *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me, and this shall rejoice my heart more than the abundance of corn and wine*. Psalm iv. 6, 7.

This is that light which can break into the darkest dungeons, from which all other lights and comforts are shut out; and without this, all other enjoyments are, what the world would be without the sun, nothing but darkness. Happy they who have this light of Divine favor and grace shining into their souls, for by it they shall be led to that city, where the sun and moon are needless; for *The glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof*. Rev, xxi. 23.

*Godliness is profitable for all things*, saith the apostle, *having the promises of this life and that which is to come;* all other blessings are the attendants of grace, and follow upon it. This blessing which the apostle here (as St. Paul also in his Epistles) joins with grace, was, with the Jews, of so large a sense, as to comprehend all that they could desire; when they wished peace, they meant all kind of good, all welfare and prosperity. And thus we may take it here, for all kind of peace; yea, and for all other blessings, but especially that spiritual peace, which is the proper fruit of grace, and doth so intrinsically flow from it.

We may and ought to wish to the church of God outward blessings, and particularly outward peace, as one of the greatest, and one of the most valuable favors of God: thus prayed the psalmist, *Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces*.

That Wisdom which doth what he will, by what means he will, and works one contrariety out of another, brings light out of darkness, good out of evil—can and doth turn tears and troubles to the advantage of his church; but certainly, in itself, peace is more suitable to its increase, and, if not abused, it proves so too. Thus in the apostolic times, it is said, Acts ix. 31, *The church had peace and increased exceedingly*.

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We ought also to wish for ecclesiastical peace to the church, that she may be free from dissensions and divisions. These readily arise, more or less, as we see, in all times, and haunt religion, and the reformation of it, as a *malus genius*. St. Paul had this to say to his Corinthians, 1 Ep. i. 5. though he had given them this testimony, that they were enriched in all utterance and knowledge, and were wanting in no gift, yet, presently after, ver. 13, *I hear that there are divisions and contentions among you. The enemy had done this*, as our Savior speaks; and this enemy is no fool, for, by Divine permission, he works to his own end very wisely; there is not one thing that doth on all hands choke the seed of religion so much, as thorny debates and differences about itself. So, in succeeding ages, and at the breaking forth of the light in Germany, in Luther's time, multitudes of sects arose.

Profane men do not only stumble, but fall and break their necks upon these divisions. We see, (think they, and some of them possibly say it out), that they who mind religion most, can not agree upon it: our easiest way is, not to embroil ourselves, not at all to be troubled with the business. Many are of Gallio's temper; they *will care for none of those things*. Thus these offences prove a mischief to the profane world, as our Savior says, *Wo to the world because of offences*.

Then those on the erring side, who are taken with new opinions and fancies, are altogether taken up with them, their main thoughts are spent upon them; and thus the sap is drawn from that which should nourish and prosper in their hearts, *sanctified useful knowledge*, and *saving grace*. The other are as weeds, which divert the nourishment in gardens from the plants and flowers; and certainly these weeds, *viz.*, men's own conceits, can not but grow more with them, when they give way to them, than solid religion doth; for their hearts (as one said of the earth) are mother to those, and but stepmother to this.

It is also a loss even to those that oppose errors and divisions, that they are forced to be busied in that way; for the wisest and godliest of them find (and such are sensible of it) that disputes in religion are no friends to that which is far sweeter in it; but hinders and abates it, *viz.*, those pious and devout thoughts, that are both the more useful and truly delightful.

As peace is a choice blessing, so this is the choicest peace, and is the peculiar inseparable effect of this grace with which it is here jointly wished—*grace* and *peace;* the flower of peace growing upon the root of grace; This spiriual peace hath two things in it. 1. Reconciliation with God. 2. Tranquillity of spirit. The quarrel and matter of enmity, you know, betwixt God and man, is the rebellion, the sin of man; and he being naturally altogether sinful, there can proceed nothing from him, but what foments and increases the hostility. It is grace alone, the most free grace of God, that contrives, and offers, and makes the peace, else it had never been; we had universally perished without it. Now in this consists the wonder of Divine grace, that the Almighty God seeks agreement, and entreats for it, with sinful clay, which he could wholly destroy in a moment.

Jesus Christ, the Mediator and purchaser of this peace, bought it with his blood, killed the enmity by his own death, Eph. ii. 15. And therefore the tenor of it in the gospel runs still in his name (Rom. v. 1): *We have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord;* and St. Paul expresses it in his salutations, which are the same with this, *Grace and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

As the free love and grace of God appointed this means and way of our peace, and offered it—so the same grace applies it, and makes it ours, and gives us faith to apprehend it.

And from our sense of this peace, or reconcilement with God, arises that which is our inward peace, a calm and quiet temper of mind. This peace which we have with God in Christ, is inviolable; but because the sense and persuasion of it may be interrupted, the soul that is truly at peace with God may for a time be disquieted in itself, through weakness of faith, or the strength of temptation, or the darkness of desertion, losing sight of that grace, that love and light of God's countenance, on which its tranquillity and joy depend. *Thou didst hide thy face*, saith David, *and I was troubled.* But when these eclipses are over, the soul is revived with new consolation, as the face of the earth is renewed and made to smile with the return of the sun in the spring; and this ought alway to uphold Christians in the saddest times, *viz.*, that the grace and love of God toward them depend not on their sense, nor upon anything in them, but is still in itself incapable of the smallest alteration.

It is natural to men to desire their own peace, the quietness and contentment of their minds: but most men miss the way to it; and therefore find it not; for there is no way to it, indeed, but this one, wherein few seek it, *viz.*, reconcilement and peace with God. The persuasion of that alone makes the mind clear and serene, like your fairest summer days. *My peace I give you*, saith Christ, *not as the world. Let not your hearts be troubled.* All the peace and favor of the world can not calm a troubled heart; but where this peace is which Christ gives, all the trouble and disquiet of the world can not disturb it. *When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation or against a man only.* (See also for this, Psalms xlvi., cxxiii.) All outward distress to a mind thus at peace,



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is but as the rattling of the hail upon the tiles, to him that sits within the house at a sumptuous feast. A good conscience is styled a feast, and with an advantage which no other feast can have, nor, were it possible, could men endure it. A few hours of feasting will weary the most professed epicure; but a conscience thus at peace, is a *continual feast*, with continual unwearied delight. What makes the world take up such a prejudice against religion as a sour unpleasant thing? They see the afflictions and griefs of Christians, but they do not see their joys, the inward pleasure of mind that they can possess in a very hard estate. Have you not tried other ways enough? Hath not he tried them who had more ability and skill for it than you, and found them not only *vanity* but *vexation of spirit?* If you have any belief of holy truth, put but this once upon the trial, seek peace in the way of grace. This inward peace is too precious a liquor to be poured into a filthy vessel. A holy heart, that gladly entertains grace, shall find that it and peace can not dwell asunder.

An ungodly man may sleep to death in the lethargy of carnal presumption and impenitency; but a true, lively, solid peace, he can not have. *There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God*, Isa. lvii. 21. And if he say there is none, speak peace who will, if all the world with one voice should speak it, it shall prove none.

*2dly*, Consider the *measure* of the apostle's desire for his scattered brethren, that this *grace* and *peace* may be *multiplied*. This the apostle wishes for them, knowing the imperfection of the graces and peace of the saints while they are here below; and this they themselves, under a sense of that imperfection, ardently desire. They that have tasted the sweetness of this grace and peace, call incessantly for more. This is a disease in earthly desires, and a disease incurable by all the things desired; there is no satisfaction attainable by them; but this avarice of spiritual things is a virtue, and by our Savior is called *blessedness*, because it tends to fulness and satisfaction. *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.*

VER. 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

VER. 4. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

IT is a cold lifeless thing to speak of spiritual things upon mere report: but they that speak of them as their own, as having share and interest in them, and some experience of their sweetness, their discourse of them is enlivened with firm belief, and ardent affection; they can not mention them, but their hearts are straight taken with such gladness, as they are forced to vent in praises. Thus our apostle here, and St. Paul, and often elsewhere, when they considered these things wherewith they were about to comfort the godly to whom they wrote, they were suddenly elevated with the joy of them, and broke forth into thanksgiving; so teaching us, by their example, what real joy there is in the consolations of the Gospel, and what praise is due from all the saints to the God of those consolations. This is such an inheritance, that the very thoughts and hopes of it are able to sweeten the greatest grief and afflictions. What then shall the possession of it be, wherein there shall be no rupture, nor the least drop of any grief at all? The main subject of these verses is, that which is the main comfort that supports the spirits of the godly in all conditions.

1. Their *after inheritance*, as in the 4th verse. 2dly, Their *present title* to it, and *assured hope* of it, ver. 3. 3dly, The *immediate cause* of both assigned, viz., *Jesus Christ*. 4thly, All this derived from the *free mercy of God*, as the first and highest cause, and returned to his praise and glory as the last and highest end of it.

For the *first*: The *inheritance*. [But because the 4th verse, which describes it, is linked with the subsequent, we will not go so far off to return back again, but first speak to this 3d verse, and in it.]

Consider 1. Their *title* to this *inheritance*, *begotten again*; 2. Their *assurance* of it, viz., *a holy or lively hope*.

The *title* which the saints have to their rich inheritance is of the validest and most unquestionable kind, *viz.*, by birth. Not by their first natural birth; but that we are all born indeed, but we find what it is (Ephes. ii. 3), *children of wrath*, heirs apparent of eternal flames. It is an everlasting inheritance too, but so much the more fearful, being of everlasting misery, or (so to speak) of immortal death; and we are made sure to it, they who remain in that condition can not lose their right, although they gladly would escape it; they shall be forced to enter possession. But it is by a new and supernatural birth that men are both freed from their engagement to that woful inheritance, and invested into the rights of this other here mentioned, which is as full of happiness as the former is miserable: therefore are they said here to be begotten again to that lively hope. God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath begotten us again. And thus the regenerate are the children of an immortal Father, and, as such, entitled to an inheritance of immortality. *If children, then heirs, heirs of God;* and this sonship is by adoption in Christ; therefore it is added, *Joint heirs with Christ*, Rom. viii. 17. We adopted children, and he the only begotten Son of God by an eternal, ineffable generation.

And yet, this our adoption is not a mere extrinsical denomination, as is adoption among men; but is accompanied with a real

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change in those that are adopted, a new nature and spirit being infused into them, by reason of which, as they are adopted to this their inheritance in Christ, they are likewise begotten of God, and born again to it, by the supernatural work of regeneration. They are like their heavenly Father; they have his image renewed on their souls, and their Father's spirit; they have it, and are actuated and led by it. This is that great mystery of the kingdom of God which puzzled Nicodemus; it was darkness to him at first, till he was instructed in that night, under the covert whereof he came to Christ.

Nature can not conceive of any generation or birth, but that which is within its own compass: only they who are partakers of this spiritual birth understand what it means; to others it is a riddle, an unsavory, unpleasant subject.

It is sometimes ascribed to the subordinate means;—to baptism, called therefore the *laver of regeneration*, Titus iii. 5; to the word of God, James i. 18; it is that immortal seed, whereby we are born again; to the ministers of his word, and the seals of it, as 1 Cor. iv. 15. *For though you have ten thousand instructers in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus have I begotten you through the gospel;* as also Gal. iv. 19. But all these means have their vigor and efficacy in this great work from the Father of spirits, who is their Father in their first creation, and infusion, and in this their regeneration, which is a new and second creation, *If any man be in Christ he is a new creature*, 2 Cor. v. 17.

Divines have reason to infer from the nature of conversion thus expressed, that man doth not bring anything to this work himself. It is true he hath a will, as his natural faculty; but that this will embraces the offer of grace, and turns to him that offers it, is from renewing grace, which sweetly and yet strongly, strongly yet sweetly, inclines it.

1. Nature can not raise itself to this any more than a man can give natural being to himself. 2. It is not a superficial change; it is a new life and being. A moral man in his changes and reformations of himself, is still the same man. Though he reform so far, as that men, in their ordinary phrase, shall call him quite another man, yet, in truth, till he be born again, there is no new nature in him. *The sluggard turns on his bed as the door on the hinges*, says Solomon. Thus the natural man turns from one custom and posture to another, but never turns off. But the Christian, by virtue of this new birth, can say indeed, *Ego non sum ego*, I am not the same man I was.

You that are nobles, aspire to this honorable condition; add this nobleness to the other, for it far surpasses it; make it the crown of all your honors and advantages. And you that are of mean birth, or if you have any stain on your birth, the only way to make up and repair all, and truly to ennoble you, is this—to be the sons of a king, yea, of the king of kings, and *this honor have all his saints. To as many as received him, he gave this privilege to be the sons of God*, John i. 12.

*Unto a lively hope.*] *Now are we the sons of God*, saith the apostle (1 John iii. 2), *but it doth not yet appear what we shall be.* These sons are heirs, but all this lifetime is their minority; yet, even now, being partakers of this new birth and sonship, they have a right to it, and in the assurance of that right, this *living hope;* as an heir, when he is capable of those thoughts, hath not only right of inheritance, but may rejoice in the hope he hath of it, and please himself in thinking of it. But hope is said to be only in respect of an uncertain good: true, in the world's phrase, it is so; for *their* hope is conversant in uncertain things, or in things that may be certain, after an uncertain manner; all their worldly hopes are tottering, built upon sand, and their hopes of heaven are but blind and groundless conjectures; but the hope of the sons of the living God is a living hope. That which Alexander said when he dealt liberally about him, that he *left hope to himself*, the children of God may more wisely and happily say, when they leave the hot pursuit of the world to others, and despise it; their portion is hope. The thread of Alexander's life was cut off in the midst of his victories, and so all his hopes vanished; but their hope can not die nor disappoint them.

But then it is said to be *lively* not only *objectively* but *effectively;* enlivening and comforting the children of God in all distresses, enabling them to encounter and surmount all difficulties in the way. And then it is *formally* so; it can not fail—dies not before accomplishment. Worldly hopes often mock men, and so cause them to be ashamed; and men take it as a great blot, and are most of all ashamed of those things that discover weakness of judgment in them. Now worldly hopes do thus—they put the fool upon a man: when he hath judged himself sure, and laid so much weight and expectation on them, then they break and foil him: they are not living, but lying hopes, and dying hopes; they die often before us, and we live to bury them, and see our own folly and infelicity in trusting to them; but at the utmost, they die with us when we die, and can accompany us no further. But this hope answers expectation to the full, and much beyond it, and deceives no way but in that happy way of far exceeding it.

A *living hope*—living in death itself! The world dares say no more for its device, than *Dum spiro spero;* but the children of God can add by virtue of this living hope, *Dum exspiro spero.* It is a fearful thing when a man and all his hopes die together. Thus saith Solomon of the wicked, Prov. xi. 7: When he dieth, then die his hopes (many of them *before*, but at the utmost *then*, all of

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them); but the *righteous hath hope in his death*, Prov. xiv. 32. Death, which cuts the sinews of all other hopes, and turns men out of all other inheritances, alone fulfils this hope, and ends it in fruition; as a messenger sent to bring the children of God home to he possession of their inheritance.

*By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from he dead.*] This refers both to *begotten again* by his resurrection, and having this *living hope* by his resurrection: and well suits both, it being the proper cause of both in this order. First, then, of the *birth;* next, of the hope.

The image of God is renewed in us by our union with Him who is *the express image of his Father's person*, Heb. i. 3. Therefore this new birth in the conception, is expressed by the *forming of Christ in the soul*, Gal. iv. 19; and his resurrection particularly is assigned as the cause of our new life. This new birth is called our *resurrection*, and that in conformity to Christ, yea, by the virtue and influence of his. His resurrection is called a *birth*, he the *first begotten from the dead*, Rev. i. 5; and that prophecy, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, Psal. ii. 7, is applied to his resurrection as fulfilled in it, Acts xiii. 33. *God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* Not only is it the exemplar, but the efficient cause of our new birth. Thus, in the sixth chapter of Romans, at large, and often elsewhere.

And thus likewise it is the cause of our *living hope*—that which indeed inspires and maintains life in it. Because he hath conquered death, and is risen again, and that is implied which followeth, he is *set down at the right hand of God*, hath entered into possession of that inheritance;—this gives us a living hope, that, according to his own request, *where he is there we may be also.* Thus this hope is strongly underset, on the one side, by the resurrection of Christ; on the other, by the abundant mercy of God the Father. Our hope depends not on our own strength or wisdom, nor on anything in us (for if it did, it would be short-lived, would die, and die quickly); but on his resurrection who can die no more: for *in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God*, Rom. vi. 10. This makes this hope not to imply, in the notion of it, uncertainty, as worldly hopes do; but it is a firm, stable, inviolable hope, *an anchor fixed within the veil.*

*According to his abundant mercy.*] Mercy is the spring of all this; yea, great mercy, and manifold mercy: "for," as St. Bernard saith, "great sins and great miseries need great mercy, and many sins and miseries need many mercies." And is not this great mercy, to make of Satan's slaves, sons of the most High? Well may the apostle say, *Behold what manner of love, and how great love the Father hath showed us, that we should be called the sons of God!*—The world knows us not because it knew not him. They that have not seen the father of a child can not know that it resembles him; thus the world knows not God, and therefore discerns not his image in his children so as to esteem them for it. But whatever be their opinion, this we must say ourselves, Behold what manner of love is this! to take firebrands of hell, and to appoint them to be one day brighter than the sun in the firmament; to *raise the poor out of the dunghill, and set them with princes*, Psalm cxiii. 7, 8.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*] Here, lastly, we see it stirs up the apostle to praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the style of the gospel—as formerly, under the law, it was *the God of Abraham, Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and *the God that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt*, &c. This now is the order of the government of grace, that it holds first with Christ our Head and in him with us. So he says, *I go to my Father and your Father, and my God and your God;* which, as St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in his Catechism, observes, shows us not only our communion with him—that might have been expressed thus, *I go to my God and Father*—but the order of the covenant, first my Father and my God, and then yours. Thus ought we, in our consideration of the mercies of God, still to take in Christ, for in him they are conveyed to us: thus (Eph. i. 3), *With all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.*

*Blessed.*] He blesseth us really: *benefaciendo benedicit.* We bless him by acknowledging his goodness. And this we ought to do at all times, Psal. xxxiv. 1: *I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth.* All this is far below him and his mercies. What are our lame praises in comparison of his love? Nothing, and less than nothing; but love will stammer, rather than be dumb. They who are among his children *begotten again*, have, in the resurrection of Christ, a lively hope of glory: as it is, Col. i. 27, *Which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.* This leads them to observe and admire that rich mercy whence it flows; and this consideration awakes them, and constrains them to break forth into praises.

*To an inheritance incorruptible.*] *As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart.* Prov. xxv. 20. Worldly mirth is so far from curing spiritual grief, that even worldly grief, where it is great and takes deep root, is not allayed but increased by it. A man who is full of inward heaviness, the more he is encompassed about with mirth, it exasperates and enrages his grief the more; like ineffectual weak physic, which removes not the humor, bu

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stirs it and makes it more unquiet; but spiritual joy is seasonable for all estates: in prosperity, it is pertinent to crown and sanctify all other enjoyments, with this which so far surpasses them; and in distress, it is the only *Nepenthe*, the cordial of fainting spirits: so, Psal. iv. 7, *He hath put joy into my heart.* This mirth makes way for itself, which other mirth can not do. These songs are sweetest in the night of distress. Therefore the apostle, writing to his scattered afflicted brethren, begins his epistle with this song of praise, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The matter of this joy is, the joyful remembrance of the happiness laid up for them, under the name of *inheritance.* Now this inheritance is described by the singular qualities of it, viz., 1. The excellency of its nature; 2. The certainty of its attainment. The former is conveyed in these three, *incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away;* the latter, in the last words of this verse and in the verse following: *Reserved in heaven for you,* &c.

God is bountiful to all—gives to all men all that they have, health, riches, honor, strength, beauty, and wit; but these things he scatters (as it were) with an indifferent hand. Upon others he looks as well as upon his beloved children; but the *inheritance* is peculiarly *theirs.* Inheritance is convertible with sonship; Abraham gave gifts to Keturah's sons, and dismissed them, Gen. xxv. 5; but the inheritance was for the Son of the Promise. When we see a man rising in preferment or estate, or admired for excellent gifts and endowments of mind, we think there is a happy man; but we consider not that none of all those things are matter of inheritance; within awhile he is to be turned out of all, and if he have not somewhat beyond all those to look to, he is but a miserable man, and so much the more miserable, that once he seemed and was reputed happy. There is a certain time wherein heirs come to possess: thus it is with this inheritance too. There is mention made by the apostle of *a perfect man—unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,* Eph. iv. 13. And though the inheritance is rich and honorable, yet the heir, being young, is held under discipline, and is more strictly dealt with, possibly, than the servants—sharply corrected for that which is let pass in them; but still, even then, in regard of that which he is born to, his condition is much better than theirs, and all the correction he suffers prejudices him not, but fits him for inheriting. The love of our heavenly Father is beyond the love of mothers in tenderness, and yet beyond the love of fathers (who are usually said to love more wisely) in point of wisdom. He will not undo his children, his heirs, with too much indulgence. It is one of his heavy judgments upon the foolish children of disobedience, that *Ease shall slay them, and their prosperity shall prove their destruction.*

While the children of God are childish and weak in faith, they are like some great heirs before they come to years of understanding: they consider not their inheritance, and what they are to come to, have not their spirits elevated to thoughts worthy of their estate, and their behavior conformed to it; but as they grow up in years, they come by little and little, to be sensible of those things, and the nearer they come to possession, the more apprehensive they are of their quality, and of what doth answerably become them to do. And this is the duty of such as are indeed heirs of glory;—to grow in the understanding and consideration of that which is prepared for them, and to suit themselves, as they are able, to those great hopes. This is what the apostle St. Paul prays for, on behalf of his Ephesians, chap. i. 18. *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the Saints.* This would make them holy and heavenly, to *have their conversation in heaven, from whence they look for a Savior.* That we may, then, the better know somewhat of the dignity and riches of this inheritance, let us consider the description which is here given us of it. And, first, it is

*Incorruptible.*] Although this seems to be much the same with the *third* quality, *that fadeth not away* (which is a borrowed expression for the illustrating of its incorruptibleness), yet, I conceive that there is some difference, and that in these three qualities there is a gradation. Thus it is called *incorruptible;* that is, it perisheth not, can not come to nothing, is an estate that can not be spent; but though it were abiding, yet it might be such as that the continuance of it were not very desirable; it would be but a misery at best, to continue always in this life. *Plotinus* thanked God that his soul was not tied to an immortal body. Then, *undefiled,* it is not stained with the least spot: *this* signifies the purity and perfection of it, as *that* the perpetuity of it. It doth not only abide, and is pure, but both together, it abideth always in its integrity. And lastly, *it fadeth not away;* it doth not fade nor wither at all, is not sometimes more, sometimes less pleasant, but ever the same, still like itself; and this constitutes the immutability of it.

As it is *incorruptible,* it carries away the palm from all earthly possessions and inheritances; for all those epithets are intended to signify its opposition to the things of this world, and to show how far it excels them all; and in this comparative light we are to consider it. For as divines say of the knowledge of God which we have here, that the negative notion makes up a great part of it—we know rather what he is not than what he is, infinite, incomprehensible, immutable, &c.; so it is of this happiness, this inheritance; and indeed it is no other than God. We can not tell you what it is, but we can

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say so far what it is not, as declares it is unspeakably above all the most excellent things of the inferior world and this present life. It is by privatives, by removing imperfections from it, that we describe it, and we can go no farther than this—*Incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.*

All things that we see, being compounded, may be dissolved again. The very visible heavens, which are the purest piece of the material world (notwithstanding the pains the philosopher takes to exempt them), the Scriptures teach us that they are *corruptible*, Psal. cii. 26. *They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed.* And from thence the apostle to the *Hebrews*, ch. i. 10, and our apostle, in his other epistle, ch. iii. 11, use the same expression. But it is needless to fetch too great a compass, to evince the corruptibleness of all inheritances. Besides what they are in themselves, it is a shorter way to prove them corruptible in relation to us and our possessing them, by our own corruptibleness and corruption, or perishing out of this life in which we enjoy them. We are here *inter peritura perituri;* the things are passing which we enjoy, and we are passing who enjoy them. An earthly inheritance is so called in regard of succession; but to every one it is at the most but for term of life. As one of the kings of Spain replied to one of his courtiers, who, thinking to please his master, wished that kings were immortal; *If that had been*, said he, *I should never have been king.* When death comes that removes a man out of all his possessions to give place to another; therefore are these inheritances decaying and dying in relation to us, because we decay and die; and when a man dies, his inheritances and honors, and all things here, are at an end, in respect of him; yea, we may say the world ends to him.

Thus Solomon reasons, that a man's happiness can not be upon this earth; because it must be some durable, abiding thing that must make him happy—abiding, to wit, in his enjoyment. Now, though the earth abide, yet, because man abides not on the earth to possess it, but one age drives out another, one generation passeth, and another cometh, *velut unda impellitur unda*, therefore, his rest and his happiness can not be here.

*Undefiled.*] All possessions here are defiled and stained with many other defects and failings—still somewhat wanting, some damp on them or crack in them; fair houses, but sad cares flying about the gilded and ceiled roofs; stately and soft beds, and a full table, but a sickly body and queasy stomach. As the fairest face has some mole or wart in it, so all possessions are stained with sin, either in acquiring or in using them, and therefore they are called, *mammon of unrighteousness*, Luke xvi. 9. Iniquity is so involved in the notion of riches, that it can very hardly be separated from them. St. Jerome says, *Verum mihi videtur illud, dives aut iniquus est, aut iniqui hæres:* To me it appears, that he who is rich is either himself an unjust man or the heir of one. Foul hands pollute all they touch; it is our sin that defiles what we possess; it is sin that burdens the whole creation, and presses groans out of the very frame of the world, Rom. viii. 22. *For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.* This our leprosy defiles our houses, the very walls and floors, our meat and drink and all we touch, polluted when alone, and polluted in society, our meetings and conversations together being for the greatest part nothing but a commerce and interchange of sin and vanity.

We breathe up and down in an infected air, and are very receptive of the infection by our own corruption within us. We readily turn the things we possess here to occasions and instruments of sin, and think there is no liberty nor delight in their use without abusing them. How few are they who can carry (as they say) a full cup even; who can have digestion strong enough for the right use of great places and estates: who can bear preferment without pride, and riches without covetousness, and ease without wantonness!

Then, as these earthly inheritances are stained with sin in their use, so what grief, and strife, and contentions about obtaining or retaining them! Doth not the matter of possession, this same *meum* and *tuum*, divide many times the affections of those who are knit together in nature, or other strict ties, and prove the very apple of strife betwixt nearest friends?

If we trace great estates to their first original, how few will be found that owe not their beginning either to fraud, or rapine, or oppression! and the greatest empires and kingdoms in the world have had their foundations laid in blood. Are not these defiled inheritances?

*That withereth not.*] A borrowed phrase, alluding to the decaying of plants and flowers, which bud and flourish at a certain time of the year, and then fade and wither, and in winter are as if they were dead.

And this is the third disadvantage of possessions and all things worldly, that they abide not in one estate, but are in a more uncertain and irregular inconstancy than either the flowers and plants of the field, or the moon, from which they are called *sublunary;* like Nebuchadnezzar's image, degenerating by degrees into baser metals, and, in the end, into a mixture of iron and clay.

The excellency, then, of this inheritance, is, that it is free from all those evils. It falls not under the stroke of time, comes not within the compass of its scythe, which hath so large a compass, and cuts down all other things.

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There is nothing in it weighing it toward corruption. It is immortal, everlasting; for it is the fruition of the immortal everlasting God, by immortal souls; and the body joined with it, shall likewise be immortal, having *put on incorruption*, as the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. xv. 54.

It *fadeth not away.*] No spot of sin nor sorrow there; all pollution wiped away, and all tears with it; no envy nor strife; not as here among men, one supplanting another, one pleading and fighting against another, dividing this point of earth with fire and sword;—no, this inheritance is not the less by division, by being parted among so many brethren, every one hath it all, each his crown, and all agreeing in casting them down before his throne, from whom they have received them, and in the harmony of his praises.

This inheritance is often called a kingdom, and a crown of glory. This last word may allude to those garlands of the ancients; and this is its property, that the flowers in it are all *amaranthes* (as a certain plant is named), and so it is called (1 Pet. v. 4), *A crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

No change at all there, no winter and summer: not like the poor comforts here, but a bliss always flourishing. The grief of the saints here, is not so much for the changes of outward things, as of their inward comforts. *Suavis hora, sed brevis mora.* Sweet presences of God they sometimes have, but they are short, and often interrupted; but *there* no cloud shall come betwixt them and their sun; they shall behold him in his full brightness for ever. As there shall be no change in their beholding, so no weariness nor abatement of their delight in beholding. They sing a new song, always the same, and yet always new. The sweetest of our music, if it were to be heard but for one whole day, would weary them who are most delighted with it. What we have here cloys, but satisfies not; the joys above never cloy, and yet always satisfy.

We should here consider the last property of this inheritance, namely, the *certainty* of it—*Reserved in heaven for you;* but that is connected with the following verse, and so will be fitly joined with it. Now for some use of all this.

If these things were believed, they would persuade for themselves; we should not need add any entreaties to move you to seek after this inheritance. Have we not experience enough of the vanity and misery of things corruptible? and are not a great part of our days already spent among them? Is it not time to consider whether we be provided with anything surer and better than what we have here; whether we have any inheritance to go home to after our wandering? or can say with the apostle (2 Cor. v. 1), *We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

If these things gain our assent while we hear them, yet it dies soon. Scarcely any retire within themselves afterward to pursue those thoughts, and to make a work indeed of them; they busy their heads rather another way, building castles in the air, and spinning out their thoughts in vain contrivances. Happy are they whose hearts the Spirit of God sets and fixes upon this inheritance: they may join in with the apostle, and say, as here, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again unto this lively hope, to this inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.*

VER. 5. Who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

IT is doubtless a great contentment to the children of God, to hear of the excellences of the life to come; they do not use to become weary of that subject; yet there is one doubt, which, if it be not removed, may damp their delight in hearing and considering of all the rest. The richer the estate is, it will the more kindle the malice and diligence of their enemies to deprive them of it, and to cut them short of possessing it. And this they know, that those spiritual powers who seek to ruin them, do overmatch them far, both in craft and force.

Against the fears of this, the apostle comforts the heirs of salvation, assuring them, that, as the estate they look for is excellent, so it is certain and safe, laid up where it is out of the reach of all adverse powers, *reserved in heaven for you.* Besides that this is a further evidence of the worth and excellency of this inheritance, it makes it sure. It confirms what was said of its excellency; for it must be a thing of greatest worth, that is laid up in the highest and best place of the world, namely, in heaven for you, where nothing that is impure once enters, much less is laid up and kept. Thus, the land where this inheritance lies, makes good all that hath been spoken of the dignity and riches of it.

But further, as it is a rich and pleasant country where it lieth, it hath also this privilege, to be the only land of rest and peace, free from all possibility of invasion. There is no spoiling of it, and laying it waste, and defacing its beauty, by leading armies into it, and making it the seat of war; no noise of drums or trumpets, no inundations of one people driving out another and sitting down in their possessions. In a word, there is nothing there subject to decay of itself, so neither is it in danger of fraud or violence. When our Savior speaks of this same happiness, in a like term, Matt. vi. 20, what is here called an *inheritance*, is there called a *treasure.* He expresses the permanency of

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it by these two, that it *hath neither moth nor rust* in itself to *corrupt* it, nor can *thieves break through and steal it*. There is a worm at the root of all our enjoyments here, corrupting causes within themselves; and besides that, they are exposed to injury from without, which may deprive us of them. How many stately palaces, which have been possibly divers years in building, hath fire upon a very small beginning destroyed in a few hours! What great hopes of gain by traffic hath one tempest mocked and disappointed! How many who have thought their possessions very sure, yet have lost them by some trick of law, and others (as in time of war) been driven from them by the sword! Nothing free from all danger but this *inheritance*, which is laid up in the hands of God, and kept in heaven for us. The highest stations in the world, namely, the estate of kings, they are but mountains of prey, one robbing and spoiling another; but in that holy mountain above, there is none to hurt, or spoil, or offer violence. What the prophet speaks of the church here, is more perfectly and eminently true of it above, Isaiah lxv. 25.

This is, indeed, a necessary condition of our joy in the thoughts of this happy estate, that we have some persuasion of our propriety, that it is *ours;* that we do not speak and hear of it, as travellers passing by a pleasant place do behold and discourse of its fair structure, the sweetness of the seat, the planting, the gardens, the meadows that are about it, and so pass on; having no further interest in it. But when we hear of this glorious inheritance, this treasure, this kingdom that is pure, and rich, and lasting, we may add, it is mine, it is reserved in heaven, and reserved for me; I have received the evidences and the earnest of it; and, as it is kept safe for me, so I shall likewise be preserved to it, and that is the other part of the certainty that completes the comforts of it. Ephes. i. 14.

The salvation which Christ hath purchased is, indeed, laid up in heaven, but we who seek after it, are on earth, compassed about with dangers and temptations. What avails it us, that our salvation is in heaven, in the place of safety and quietness, while we ourselves are tossed upon the stormy seas of this world, amidst rocks and shelves, every hour in danger of shipwreck? Our inheritance is in a sure hand indeed, our enemies can not come at it; but they may over-run and destroy us at their pleasure, for we are in the midst of them. Thus might we think and complain, and lose the sweetness of all our other thoughts concerning heaven, if there were not as firm a promise for our own safety in the midst of our dangers, as there is of the safety of our inheritance that is out of danger.

The assurance is full, thus; it is *kept* for us in heaven, and we kept on earth for it: as it is *reserved* for us, we are no less surely *preserved* to it. There is here, 1. The estate itself, *salvation*. 2. The preservation, or securing, of those that expect it, *kept*. 3. The time of full possession, *in the last time*.

1. The estate—*unto salvation*. Before it is called an *inheritance;* here we are more particularly told what is meant by that, namely, *salvation*. This is more expressly sure, being a deliverance from misery, and it imports, withal, the possession of perfect happiness. The first part of our happiness is, to be freed from those miseries to which we are subject by our guiltiness; to be set free, 1. From the curse of the law, and the wrath of God, from everlasting death. 2. From all kind of mortality and decaying. 3. From all power and stain of sin. 4. From all temptation. 5. From all the griefs and afflictions of this life. To have the perfection of grace in the fulness of holiness, and the perfection of bliss in the fulness of joy, in the continual vision of God!—but how little we are able to say of this, our apostle here teacheth us, in that it is veiled to us; only so much shines through, as we are capable of here; but the revealed knowledge of it is only in the possession; it is *to be revealed in the last time*.

2*dly*. Their preservation, with the causes of it. *Kept by the power of God through faith*. The inheritance is kept not only in safety, but in quietness. The children of God, for whom it is kept, while they are here, are kept safe indeed, but not unmolested and unassaulted; they have enemies, and such as are stirring, and cunning, and powerful; but, in the midst of them, they are guarded and defended; they perish not, according to the prayer of our Savior poured out for them, John xvii. 16, *I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world; but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil*.

They have the prince of the power of the air, and all his armies, all the forces he can make, against them. Though his power is nothing but tyranny and usurpation, yet because once they were under his yoke, he bestirs himself to pursue them, when they are led forth from their captivity, as Pharaoh, with all his chariots and horses and horsemen, pursues after the Israelites going out of Egypt.

The word in the original (φρουρουμενοι) here translated *kept*, is a military term, used for those who are *kept* as in a fort or garrison-town besieged. So Satan is still raising batteries against this fort, using all ways to take it, by strength or stratagem, unwearied in his assaults, and very skilful to know his advantages, and where we are weakest, there to set on. And besides all this, he hath intelligence with a party within us, ready to betray us to him; so that it were impossible for us to hold out, were there not another watch and guard than our own, and other walls and bulwarks than any that our skill

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and industry can raise for our own defence. In this, then, is our safety, that there is a power above our own, yea and above all our enemies, that guards us, *salvation* itself *our walls and bulwarks.* We ought to watch, but when we do so in obedience to our commander, the captain of our salvation, yet it is his own watching, who *sleeps* not, nor so much as *slumbers,* it is that preserves us, and makes ours not to be in vain. Psal. cxxvi. 1; Isa. xxvii. 3. And therefore those two are jointly commanded, *Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. Watch,* there is the necessity of our diligence; *pray,* there is the insufficiency of it, and the necessity of his watching, by whose power we are effectually preserved, and that power is our fort. Isa. xxvi. 1, *Salvation hath God appointed for walls and bulwarks.* What more safe than to be walled with *salvation* itself. So, Prov. xviii. 10, *The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous fly into it and are safe.*

Now the causes of our preservation are two, 1. Supreme, *the power of God.* 2. Subordinate, *faith.* The supreme *power of God,* is that on which depend our stability and perseverance. When we consider how weak we are in ourselves, yea, the very strongest among us, and how assaulted, we wonder, and justly we may, that any can continue one day in the state of grace: but when we look on the strength by which we are guarded, the power of God, then we see the reason of our stability to the end; for omipotency supports us, and the everlasting arms are under us.

Then *faith* is the second cause of our preservation; because it applies the first cause, the *power of God.* Our faith lays hold upon this power, and this power strengthens faith, and so we are preserved; it puts us within those walls, sets the soul within the guard of the power of God, which, by self-confidence and vain presuming in its own strength, is exposed to all kind of danger. Faith is an humble self-denying grace; it makes the Christian nothing in himself and all in God.

The weakest persons who are within a strong place, women and children, though they were not able to resist the enemy, if they were alone, yet so long as the place wherein they are is of sufficient strength, and well manned, and every way accommodate to hold out, they are in safety; thus the weakest believer is safe, because by believing he is within the strongest of all defences. Faith is the victory, and Christ sets his strength against Satan's; and when the Christian is hard beset with some temptation, too strong for himself, then he looks up to Him who is the great conqueror of the powers of darkness, and calls to him, "Now, Lord, assist thy servant in this encounter, and put to thy strength, that the glory may be thine." Thus, faith is such an engine as draws in the power of God and his Son Jesus into the works and conflicts that it hath in hand. *This is our victory, even our faith.* 1 John v. 4.

It is the property of *a good Christian* to magnify the power of God, and to have high thoughts of it, and therefore it is his privilege to find safety in that power. David can not satisfy himself with one or two expressions of it, but delights in multiplying them. Psalm xviii. 1, *The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.* Faith looks above all, both that which the soul hath, and that which it wants, and answers all doubts and fears with this almighty power upon which it rests.

3*dly.* The time of full possession—*ready to be revealed in the last time.* This salvation is that great work wherein God intended to manifest the glory of his grace, contrived before time, and in the several ages of the world brought forward, after the decreed manner; and the full accomplishment of it is reserved for the end of time.

The souls of the faithful do enter into the possession of it, when they remove from their houses of clay; yet is not their happiness complete till that great day of the appearing of Jesus Christ. They are naturally imperfect till their bodies be raised and rejoined to their souls, to partake together of their bliss; and they are mystically imperfect, till all the rest of the members of Jesus Christ be added to them.

But then shall their joy be absolutely full, when both their own bodies, and the mystical body of Christ shall be glorified: when all the children of that glorious family shall meet, and sit down to that great marriage supper at their Father's table. Then shall the music of that new song be full, when there is not one wanting of those that are appointed to sing it for eternity. In that day shall our Lord Jesus *be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe,* 2 Thess. i. 10.

You see what it is that the gospel offers you, and you may gather how great both your folly and your guiltiness will be, if you neglect and slight so great salvation when it is brought to you, and you are entreated to receive it. This is all that the preaching of the word aims at, and yet, who hearkens to it? How few lay hold on this eternal life, this inheritance, this crown that is held forth to all that hear of it!

Oh! that you could be persuaded to be saved, that you would be willing to embrace salvation! You think you would; but if it be so, then I may say, though you would be saved, yet your custom of sin, your love to sin, and love to the world, will not suffer you; and these will still hinder you, unless you put on holy resolutions to break through them, and trample them under foot, and take



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this kingdom by a hand of violence, which God is so well pleased with. He is willingly overcome by that force, and gives this kingdom most willingly, where it is so taken; it is not attained by slothfulness, and sitting still with folded hands; it must be invaded with strength of faith, with armies of prayers and tears; and they who set upon it thus are sure to take it.

Consider what we are doing, how we misplace our diligence on things that abide not, or we abide not to enjoy them. *We have no abiding city here*, saith the apostle, but he adds that which comforts the citizens of the new Jerusalem, *We look for one to come, whose builder and maker is God.* Hear not these things idly, as if they concerned you not, but let them move you to resolution and actions. Say, as they said of *Canaan, it is a good land, let us go up and possess it.* Learn to use what you have here as travellers, and let your home, your inheritance, your treasure be on high, which is by far the richest and the safest; and if it be so with you, then *Where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also.*

VER. 6. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.

THE same motives can not beget contrary passions in the soul; therefore, the apostle reduces the mixture of sorrowing and rejoicing that is usual in the heart of a Christian to the different causes of both, and shows which of the two hath the stronger cause, and is therefore always predominant in him who entertains and considers it aright.

His scope is, to stir up and strengthen spiritual joy in his afflicted brethren; and therefore having set the matter of it before them in the preceding verses, he now applies it, and expressly opposes it to their distresses.

Some read these words exhortatively, *In which rejoice ye.* It is so intended, but I conceive it serves that end better indicatively, as we now read it, *In which ye rejoice.* It exhorts in a more insinuating and persuasive manner, that it may be so, to urge it on them, that it is so. Thus St. Paul, Acts xxvi. 27, *King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.* And straight he answered, *Thou almost persuadest me to be a Christian.* This implies how just and how reasonable it is, that the things spoken of should make them glad; in these they will rejoice, yea, do rejoice. Certainly, if you know and consider what the causes of your joy are, ye can not choose but find it within you, and in such a measure as to swallow up all your temporary sorrows, how great and how many soever their causes be.

We are then to consider severally these bitter waters and the sweet, this sorrow and this joy. 1. In their springs; 2. In their streams.

And first, they are called *temptations*, and *manifold temptations.* The habits of Divine supernatural grace are not acquirable by human study, or by industry, or by exercise; they are of immediate infusion from heaven; yet are they infused to the end that they may act and exercise themselves in the several conditions and occurrences of a Christian's life, and by that they grow stronger. Whatsoever oppositions or difficulties grace meets with in its acting, go under this general name of *temptations.* It is not necessary to reckon up the variety of senses of this word, in its full latitude; how God is said to tempt man, and how it is said that he tempts him not; how man tempts God, and how it is said that God is not tempted; how Satan tempts men, and men one another, and a man himself: all these are several acceptations of this word; but the *temptations* here meant, are the things by which men are tempted, and particularly the saints of God. And though there is nothing in the words, that may not agree to all sorts of temptations which the godly are subject to; yet I conceive it is particularly meant of their afflictions and distresses, as the apostle James likewise uses it, chap. i. 2.

And they are so called, because they give particular and notable proof of the temper of a Christian's spirit, and draw forth evidence both of the truth and the measure of the grace that is in them. If they fail and are foiled, as sometimes they are, this convinces them of that human frailty and weakness which are in them, and so humbles them, and drives them out of themselves to depend upon another for more strength and better success in after-encounters. If they acquit themselves like Christians indeed (the Lord managing and assisting that grace which he hath given them), then all their valor, and strength, and victories, turn to his praise, from whom they have received all.

A man is not only unknown to others but to himself, that hath never met with such difficulties as require faith, and Christian fortitude, and patience, to surmount them. How shall a man know whether his meekness and calmness of spirit be real or not, while he meets with no provocation, nothing that contradicts or crosses him? But when somewhat sets upon him, that is in itself very unpleasant and grievous to him, and yet, if in that case he retains his moderation of spirit, and flies not out into impatience, either against God or men, this gives experiment of the truth and soundness of that grace within him; whereas standing water which is clear at top while it is untouched, yet if it have mud at the bottom, stir it a little, and it rises presently.

It is not altogether unprofitable; yea, it is great wisdom in Christians to be arming themselves against such temptations as may befall them hereafter, though they have not as yet met with them; to labor to overcome them beforehand, to suppose the hardest things that may be incident to them; and to

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put on the strongest resolutions they can attain unto. Yet all that is but an imaginary effort; and therefore there is no assurance that the victory is any more than imaginary too, till it come to action, and then, they that have spoken and thought very confidently, may prove but (as one said of the Athenians) *fortes in tabula*, patient and courageous in picture or fancy; and notwithstanding all their arms, and dexterity in handling them by way of exercise, may be foully defeated when they are to fight in earnest. The children of Ephraim being armed, and carrying bows (says the psalmist, Psal. lxxviii. 9), *yet turned back in the day of battle.* It is the battle that tries the soldier, and the storm the pilot. How would it appear that Christians can be themselves, not only patient, but cheerful in poverty, in disgrace, and temptations, and persecutions, if it were not often their lot to meet with them? He who framed the heart, knows it to be but deceitful, and he who gives grace, knows the weakness and strength of it exactly; yet he is pleased to speak thus, that by afflictions and hard tasks he tries what is in the hearts ot his children. For the word of God speaks to men, and therefore it speaks the language of the children of men: thus, Gen. xxii. 12, *Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.*

God delights to call forth his champions to meet with great temptations, to make them bear crosses of more than ordinary weight; as commanders in war put men of most valor and skill upon the hardest services. God sets some strong furious trial upon a strong Christian, made strong by his own grace, and by his victory, makes it appear to the world, that though there is a great deal of the counterfeit coin of profession in religion, yet some there are, who have the power, the reality of it, and that it is not an invention, but there is truth in it; that the invincible grace, the very spirit of God dwells in the hearts of true believers; that he hath a number who do not only speak big, but do indeed and in good earnest despise the world, and overcome it by his strength. Some men take delight to see some kind of beasts fight together; but to see a Christian mind encountering some great affliction, and conquering it, to see his valor in not sinking at the hardest distresses of this life, nor the most frightful end of it, the cruellest kinds of death, for his sake —this is (as one said) *dignum Deo spectaculum;* this is a combat which God delights to look upon, and he is not a mere beholder in it, for it is the power of his own grace that enables and supports the Christian in all those conflicts and temptations.

*Through manifold temptations.*] This expresses a multitude of temptations, and those too of divers kinds, many and manifold. It were no hard condition to have a trial now and then, with long ease and prosperity betwixt; but to be plied with one affliction at the heels of another, to have them come thronging in by multitudes and of different kinds, uncouth, unaccustomed evils, such as a man hath not been acquainted with before, this is that which is often the portion of those who are the beloved of God, Psal. xlii. 7. *Deep calleth unto deep, at the noise of thy water-spouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.*

*Ye are in heaviness.*] This the apostle blames not, but aims at the moderating of it. Seek not altogether to dry up this stream, but to bound it, and keep it within its banks. Grace doth not destroy the life of nature, but adds to it a life more excellent; yea, grace doth not only permit, but requires some feeling of afflictions. There is an affected pride of spirit in some men, instead of patience, suitable only to the doctrine of the stoics as it is usually taken; they strive not to feel at all the afflictions that are on them; but this is to *despise the correction of the Lord*, which is alike forbidden with fainting under it. Heb. xii. 5. We should not stop our ears, but *hear the rod, and him that hath appointed it*, as the prophet speaks, Mic. vi. 9. Where there is no feeling at all, there can be no patience. Consider it as the hand of God, and thence argue the soul into submission, Psal. xxxix. 9. *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.* But this heaviness is mitigated, and set, as it were, within its banks, betwixt these two considerations, 1. The *utility*, 2. The *brevity* of it: the profitableness—and the shortness of it.

To a worldly man, great gain sweetens the hardest labor; and to a Christian, spiritual profit and advantage may do much to move him to take those afflictions well which are otherwise very unpleasant. Though *they are not joyous for the present*, yet this allays the sorrow of them, the fruit that grows out of them, *that peaceable fruit of righteousness.* Heb. xii. 11.

*A bundle of folly is in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall beat it out*, saith Solomon. Though the children of God are truly (as our Savior calls them) the children of wisdom, yet, being renewed only in part, they are not altogether free from those follies that call for this rod to beat them out, and sometimes have such a bundle of follies as require a bundle of rods to be spent upon it—*many and manifold afflictions.*

It is not an easy matter to be drawn from, nor to be beaten from, the love of this world, and this is what God mainly requires of his children, that they be not in love with the world, nor the things of it; for that is contrary to the love of God, and so far as that is entertained, this is wanting. And if in the midst of afflictions they are sometimes subject to this disease, how would it grow upon them with ease and prosperity! When they are beaten from one worldly folly or delight, they are ready, through nature's corruption, to lay hold upon some other—being thrust

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out from it at one door, to enter at some other; as children unwilling to be weaned, if one breast be imbittered, they seek to the other; and therefore there must be somewhat to drive them from that too. Thus it is clear there is need, great need of afflictions, yea, of many afflictions, that the saints be *chastened by the Lord, that they may not be condemned by the world.* 1 Cor. xi. 32.

Many resemblances there are for illustration of this truth, in things both of nature and of art, some common, and others choicer: but these are not needful. The experience of Christians tells them, how easily they grow proud, and secure, and carnal, with a little ease, and when outward things go smoothly with them; and therefore what unhappiness were it for them to be very happy that way!

Let us learn, then, that in regard of our present frailty there is need of afflictions, and so not promise ourselves exemption, how calm soever our seas are for the present; and then for the number, and measure, and weight of them, to resign that wholly into the hands of our wise Father and Physician, who perfectly knows our mould and our maladies, and what kind and quantity of chastisement are needful for our cure.

*Though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness.*] The other consideration which moderates this heaviness, is its shortness. Because we willingly forget eternity, therefore this moment seems much in our eyes: but, if we could look upon it aright, of how little concernment is it what be our condition here! If it were as prosperous as we could wish or imagine, it is but for a *little season.* The rich man in the gospel talked of many years, but *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee,* was the longest period. The many years are quickly drawn to a very great abatement, and if full of pains and griefs, those do help to put an end to themselves, and hasten to it. Well then might St. Austin say, *Hic ure, cæde, modò ibi parcas,* Use me here as pleaseth thee, so that hereafter it may be well with me.

*Wherein.*] This word, though it can not fall amiss, being referred to any particular to which interpreters have appropriated it, yet it is rather to be taken as relative to the whole complex sense of the preceding verses, concerning the hope of glory. In this thing ye rejoice, that ye are begotten again—that there is such an inheritance, and that you are made heirs of it—that it is kept for you, and you for it—that nothing can come betwixt you and it, to disappoint you of possessing and enjoying it—that though there be many deserts, and mountains, and seas, in the way, yet you have ascertained, that you shall come safe thither.

This is but one thing, while the cause of your grief is *temptations,* and *manifold temptations,* yet this one thing weighs down all that multitude. The heart being grieved in one thing naturally looks out for its ease to some other; and there is usually somewhat that is a man's great comfort, that he turns his thoughts to, when he is crossed and afflicted in other things: but herein lies the folly of the world, that the things they choose for their refuge and comfort are such as may change themselves, and turn into discomfort and sorrow; but the godly man, who is the fool in the natural man's eyes, goes beyond all the rest in his wise choice in this. He rises above all that is subject to change, casts his anchor within the veil. That in which he rejoiceth is still matter of joy unmoveable and unalterable; although not only his estate, but the whole world were turned upside down, yet this is the same, or rather, in the psalmist's words, *Though the earth were removed, and the greatest mountains cast into the sea, yet will not we fear.* Psal. xlvi. 2. When we shall receive that rich and pure and abiding inheritance, that salvation which shall be revealed in the last time, and when time itself shall cease to be, then there shall be no more reckoning of our joys by days and hours, but they shall run parallel with eternity. Then all our love, that is now scattered and parcelled out upon the vanities among which we are here, shall be united and gathered into one, and fixed upon God, and the soul filled with the delight of his presence.

The sorrow was limited and bounded by the considerations we spoke of; but this joy, this exultation, and leaping for joy (for so it is), is not bounded, it can not be too much: its measure is, to know no measure. The afflictions, the matter of heaviness, are but a transient touch of pain; but that whereon this joy is built is most permanent, the measure of it can not exceed, for the matter of it is infinite and eternal, beyond all hyperbole. There is no expression we have which can reach it, much less go beyond it: itself is the hyperbole, still surpassing all that can be said of it. Even in the midst of heaviness itself, such is this joy that it can maintain itself in the depth of sorrow; this oil of gladness still swims above, and can not be drowned by all the floods of affliction, yea, it is often most sweet in the greatest distress. The soul relishes spiritual joy best, when it is not glutted with worldly delights, but finds them turned into bitterness.

For application. In that we profess ourselves Christians, we all pretend to be the sons of God, and so heirs of this glory; and if each man were individually asked, he would say, he hoped to attain it: but were there nothing else, this might abundantly convince us, that the greatest part of us delude ourselves, and are deceived in this; for how few are there who do really find this height of joy, of gladness and exultation, in their thoughts and hopes of it, who do daily refresh and glad themselves with the consideration of what is laid up for them above, more than with all their enjoyments here below.

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Consider how the news of some small outward advantage that is to come to us raises our light vain hearts, and makes them leap within us; and yet this news of a kingdom prepared for us (if we be indeed believers), stirs us not; our hearts are as little affected with it as if it concerned us not at all: and this is too clear an evidence against us, that indeed it concerns us not, that our portion as yet is not in it.

In what a fool's paridise will men be with the thoughts of worthless things, and such things too as they shall never obtain, nor ever shall have any further being than what they have in their fancy! And how will men frequently roll over in their minds the thoughts of any pleasing good they hope for! And yet we, who say we have hopes of the glory to come, can pass many days without one hour spent in the rejoicing thought of the happiness we look for! If any person of a mean condition for the present were made sure to become very rich and be advanced to great honor within a week, and after that to live to a great age in that high estate, enjoying health and all imaginable pleasures, judge ye, whether in the few days betwixt the knowledge of those news and the enjoying of them, the thoughts of what he were to attain to would not be frequent with him, and be always welcome. There is no comparison betwixt all we can imagine this way and the hopes we speak of; and yet, how seldom are our thoughts upon those things, and how faint and slender is our rejoicing in them! Can we deny that it is unbelief of these things that causeth this neglect and forgetting of them? The discourse, the tongue of men and angels can not beget Divine belief of the happiness to come; only he who gives it, gives faith likewise to apprehend it, and lay hold upon it, and, upon our believing, to be filled with joy in the hopes of it.

VER. 7. That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

*The way of the just* (saith *Solomon*) *is as the shining light, that shineth more and more to the perfect day.* Still making forward, and ascending toward perfection, moving as fast when they are clouded with affliction as at any time else; yea, all that seems to work against them, furthers them. Those graces that would possibly grow heavy and unwieldly, by too much ease, are held in breath, and increase their activity and strength by conflict. Divine grace, even in the heart of weak and sinful man, is an invincible thing. Drown it in the waters of adversity, it rises more beautiful, as not being drowned indeed, but only washed; throw it into the furnace of fiery trials, it comes out purer, and loses nothing but the dross which our corrupt nature mixes with it. Thus the apostle here expounds the *if need be* of the former verse, and so justifies the joy in afflictions, which there he speaks of, by their utility and the advantage faith derives from them: it is so tried that it shall appear in its full brightness at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The peculiar treasure of a Christian being the grace which he receives from heaven, and particularly that sovereign grace of faith, whatsoever he can be assured will better him any way in this he will not only bear patiently, but gladly embrace it. See Rom. v. 3. Therefore the apostle sets this before his brethren in those words of this verse which express, 1. The, worth and excellency of faith; 2. The usefulness of temptations in relation to it.

1*st*. The worth and excellency of faith. The trial of faith is called *more precious*, a work of more worth than the trial of gold, because faith itself is of more value than gold. The apostle chooses this comparison as fitting his purpose for the illustration of both,—the worth of faith and likewise the use of temptations, representing the one by gold, and the other by the trying of gold in the fire.

The worth of gold is, 1. Real, the purest and most precious of all metals, having many excellent properties beyond them, as they who write of the nature of gold observe. 2. Far greater in the esteem and opinion of men. See how men hurry up and down, over sea and land, unwearied in their pursuit, with hazard of life, and often with the loss of uprightness and a good conscience; and not only thus esteem it in itself, but make it the rule of their esteem one of another, valuing men less or more as they are more or less furnished with it. And we see at what a height this is; for things we would commend much, we borrow its name to describe them, e. g., *golden mediocrity;* and that age which they would call the best of all, they name it the *golden age;* and as Seneca observes, describing heavenly things (as *Ovid* the sun's palace and chariot), still *gold* is the word for all.

And the Holy Scriptures, descending to our reach, do set forth the riches of the new Jerusalem by it, Rev. xxi., and the excellency of Christ, Cant. v. 11, 14. And here the preciousness of faith, whereof Christ is the object, is said to be *more precious than gold*,

I will not insist in the parallel of faith with gold in the other qualities of it, as that it is pure and solid as gold, and that it is most ductile and malleable as gold; beyond all other metals, it plies any way with the will of God. But then faith truly enriches the soul; and as gold answers all things, so faith gives the soul propriety in all the rich consolations of the gospel, in all the promises of life and salvation, in all needful blessings: it draws virtue from Christ to strengthen itself and all other graces.

And thus it is not only precious as gold, but goes far above the comparison: it is *more*

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*precious*, yea, *much more precious*, 1. In its original; the other is digged out of the bowels of the earth; but the mine of this gold is above, it comes from heaven. 2. In its nature, answerable to its original, it is immaterial, spiritual, and pure. We refine gold and make it purer, but when we receive faith pure in itself, we mix dross with it, and make it impure by the alloy of unbelief. 3. In its endurance flowing from the former: it perisheth not. Gold is a thing in itself corruptible and perishing, and to particular owners it perisheth in their loss of it, they being deprived of it in any way.

Other graces are likewise tried in the same furnace; but faith is named as the root of all the rest. Sharp afflictions give a Christian a trial of his love to God, whether it be single and for himself or not; for then it will be the same when he strikes as when he embraces, and in the fire of affliction will rather grow the hotter, and be more taken off from the world, and set upon him. Again, the grace of patience is put particularly upon trial in distresses. But both these spring from faith; for love rises from a right and strong belief of the goodness of God, and patience from a persuasion of the wisdom and love of God, and the truth of his promises. He hath said, *I will not fail thee*, and that we shall not be tempted above our strength, and he will give the issue. Now the belief of these things causes patience. *The trial of faith worketh patience.* James i. 3. For therefore doth the Christian resign up himself, and all that concerns him, his trials, the measure and length of them all, unto God's disposal, because he knows that he is in the hands of a wise and loving father. Thus the trial of these and other particular graces doth still resolve into this, and is comprised under the trial of faith. This brings us,

*2dly.* To the usefulness of temptations in relation to it.

This trial (as that of gold) may be for a two-fold end. 1. For experiment of the truth and pureness of a Christian's faith. 2. To refine it yet more, and to raise it to a higher pitch or degree of pureness.

1. The furnace of afflictions shows upright, real faith to be such indeed, remaining still the same even in the fire, the same that it was, undiminished, as good gold loses none of its quantity in the fire. Doubtless many are deceived in time of ease and prosperity, with imaginary faith and fortitude: so that there may be still some doubt, while a man is underset with outward helps, as riches, friends, esteem, &c., whether he leans upon those or upon God, who is an invisible support, though stronger than all that are visible, and is the peculiar and alone stay of faith in all conditions. But when all these outward props are plucked away from a man, then it will be manifest whether something else upholds him or not; for if there be nothing else, then he falls; but if his mind stands firm and unremoved as before, then it is evident he laid not his weight upon these things which he had then about him, but was built upon a foundation, though not seen, which is able alone to stay him, although he be not only frustrated of all other supports, but beaten upon with storms and tempests; as our Savior says, *the house fell not because it was founded on a rock.* Matt. vii. 25.

This testified the truth of *David's* faith, who found it stay his mind upon God, when there was nothing else near that could do it: *I had fainted, unless I had believed.* Psal. xxvii. 13. So in his strait, 1 Sam. xxx. 6, where it is said that *David was greatly distressed; but he encouraged himself in the Lord his God.* Thus Psal. lxxxiii. 26. *My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.* The heart's natural strength of spirit and resolution may bear up under outward weakness, or the failing of the flesh; but when the heart itself fails, which is the strength of the flesh, what shall strengthen it? nothing but God, *who is the strength of the heart and its portion for ever.* Thus faith worketh alone, when the case suits that of the prophet's, Hab. iii. 17. *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, &c., yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

In spiritual trials, which are the sharpest and most fiery of all, when the furnace is within a man, when God doth not only shut up his loving-kindness from his feeling, but seems to shut it up in hot displeasure; when he writes bitter things against him, yet then to depend upon him, and wait for his salvation, and the more he smites the more he cleaves to him,—this is not only a true, but a strong, and very refined faith indeed. Well might *he* say, *When I am tried I shall come forth as gold*, who could say that word, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:* though I saw, as it were, his hand lifted up to destroy me, yet from that same hand would I expect salvation.

2. As the furnace shows faith to be what it is, so also it betters it, and makes it more precious and purer than it was.

The graces of the Spirit, as they come from the hand of God, who infuses them, are nothing but pureness; but being put into a heart where sin dwells (which, till the body be dissolved and taken to pieces, can not be fully purged out), there they are mixed with corruption and dross: and particularly faith is mixed with unbelief, and love of earthly things, and dependance upon the creature, if not more than God, yet together with him; and for this is the furnace needful, that the soul may be purified from this dross, and made more sublime and spiritual in believing. It is a hard task, and many times comes but slowly forward, to teach the heart, by discourse and speculation, to sit loose from the world at all sides, not to cleave to the

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best things in it, though we be compassed about with them; *though riches do increase*, yet *not to set our hearts on them*, Psal. lxxii. 10: not to trust in such *uncertain things* as they are, as the apostle speaks, 1 Tim. vi. 17. Therefore God is pleased to choose the more effectual way to teach his own the right and pure exercise of faith, either by withholding or withdrawing those things from them. He makes them relish the sweetness of spiritual comfort, by depriving them of those outward comforts whereon they were in most danger to have doated to excess, and so to have forgotten themselves and him. When they are reduced to necessity, and experimentally trained up easily to let go their hold of any thing earthly, and to stay themselves only upon their rock, this is the very refining of their faith, by those losses and afflictions wherewith they are exercised. They who learn bodily exercises, as fencing, &c., are not taught by sitting still, and hearing rules, or seeing others practice, but they learn by exercising themselves. The way to profit in the art of believing, or of coming to this spiritual activity of faith, is to be often put to that work in the most difficult way, to make up all wants and losses in God, and to sweeten the bitterest griefs with his loving-kindness.

*Might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory.*] This is the end that is intended, and shall be certainly obtained by all these hot trials. Faith shall come through them all, and *shall be found unto praise*, &c. An unskilful beholder may think it strange to see gold thrown into the fire, and left there for a time; but he that puts it there would be loath to lose it; his purpose is to make some costly piece of work of it. Every believer gives himself to Christ, and he undertakes to present them blameless to the Father: not one of them shall be lost, nor one drachm of their faith; they shall be found, and their faith shall be found, when he appears. That faith which is here in the furnace, shall be then made up into a crown of pure gold: *it shall be found unto praise, and honor, and glory.*

This praise, and honor, and glory, may be referred, either to believers themselves, according to the Apostle St. Paul's expression, Rom. ii. 7, or to Christ who appears: but the two will agree well together, that it be both to their praise, and to the praise of Christ; for certainly, all their praise and glory shall terminate in the glory of their head—Christ, who is God, blessed for ever. They have each their crown; but their honor is, to cast them all down before his throne. *He shall be glorified in his saints, and admired in them that believe.* They shall be glorious in him; and therefore in all their glory he shall be glorified: for as they have derived their glory from him, it shall all return back to him again.

*At the appearance of Jesus Christ.*] This denotes the time when this shall come to pass; for Christ is faithful and true; he hath promised to come again, and to judge the world in righteousness, and he will come and will not tarry. He shall judge righteously in that day, who was himself unrighteously judged here on earth. It is called the *revelation;* all other things shall be revealed in that day; the most hidden things, good and evil, shall be unveiled; but it is eminently the day of *his revelation:* it shall be by his light, by the brightness of his coming, that all other things shall be revealed; but he himself shall be the worthiest sight of all. All eyes shall behold him. He shall then gloriously appear before all men and angels, and shall by all be acknowledged to be the Son of God and judge of the world: some shall with joy know him, and acknowledge him to be so; others to their horror and amazement. How beautiful shall he be to those who love him, when he, as the glorious head, shall appear with his whole body mystical together with him!

Then the glory and praise which all the saints shall be honored with, shall recompense fully all the scorns and ignominies and distresses they have met with here. And they shall shine the brighter for them. Oh! if we considered often that solemn day, how light should we set by the opinions of men, and all outward hardships that can befall us! How easily should we digest dispraise and dishonor here, and pass through all cheerfully, provided we may be then found in him, and so partakers of *praise, and glory, and honor, in that day of his appearing!*

VER. 8. When having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.
VER. 9. Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

IT is a paradox to the world which the apostle hath asserted, that there is a joy which can subsist in the midst of sorrow; therefore he insists in confirmation of it, and in all these words proves it to the full, yea, with advantage, that the saints have not only some measure of joy in the griefs that abound upon them here, but excellent and eminent joy, such as makes good all that can be said of it, such as can not be spoken too much of, for it is *unspeakable*, nor too much magnified, for it is *glorious.*

To evidence the truth of this, and to confirm his brethren in the experienced knowledge of it, he expresses here more particularly and distinctly the causes of this their joy, which are,

1. The *object* or *matter* of it; 2. The *apprehension* and *appropriation* of that *object:* which two conjoined, are the entire cause of all rejoicing.

1. The *object* is Jesus Christ, ver. 8, and the salvation purchased by him, ver, 9. For these two can not be severed, and these two verses which speak of them, require (as is

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evident by their connexion) to be considered together.

2. The apprehension of these is set forth, first, negatively, not by bodily sight; secondly, positively: whereas it might seem to abate the certainty and liveliness of their rejoicing, that it is of things they had not seen, nor do yet see: this is abundantly made up by three for one, each of them more excellent than the mere bodily sight of Christ in the flesh, which many had who were never the better by it: the three things are, those three prime Christian graces, faith, love, and hope: the two former in ver. 8, the third in ver. 9.—Faith in Christ begetting love to him, and both these giving assured hope of salvation by him, making it as certain to them, as if it were already in their hand, and they in possession of it. And from all these together results this exultation, or leaping for joy, *joy unspeakable, and full of glory.*

This is that *one thing* that so much concerns us; and therefore we mistake very far, and forget our own highest interest too much, when we either speak or hear of it slightly, and apply not our hearts to it. What is it that all our thoughts and endeavors drive at? What means all that we are doing in the world? Though we take several ways to it, and wrong ways for the most part, yea, such ways as lead not to it, but set us further off from it; yet what we all seek after by all our labor under the sun, is something that may be matter of contentment and rejoicing to us when we have attained it. Now here it is, and in vain is it sought for elsewhere. And for this end it is represented to you, that it may be yours, if ye will entertain it; not only that you may know this to be a truth, that in Jesus Christ is laid up true consolation and rejoicing, that he is the magazine and treasury of it, but that you may know how to bring him home into your hearts, and lodge him there, and so to have the spring of joy within you.

That which gives full joy to the soul, must be something that is higher and better than itself. In a word, he who made it, can alone make it glad after this manner, with *unspeakable and glorious joy.* But the soul, while remaining guilty of rebellion against him, and unreconciled, can not behold him but as an enemy; any belief that it can have of him while it is in that posture, is not such as can fetch *love*, and *hope*, and so *rejoicing*, but what the faith of devils produceth, only begetting terror and trembling. But the light of his countenance, shining in the face of his Son the Mediator, gladdens the heart; and it is the looking upon him so that causeth the soul to *believe*, and *love*, and *hope*, and *rejoice.* Therefore the apostle, in his description of the estate of the Gentiles before Christ was preached to them, Eph. ii., joins these together: *Without Christ*—that was the cause of all the rest—therefore, without comfort in the promises, *without hope, and without God in the world.* So he is here by our apostle expressed, as the object. In all these, therefore, he is the matter of our joy, because our *faith*, and *love*, and *hope of salvation*, do centre in him.

The apostle writing to the dispersed Jews, many of whom had not known or seen Christ in the flesh, commends their love and faith, for this reason, that it did not depend upon bodily sight, but was pure, and spiritual, and made them of the number of those whom our Savior himself pronounces *blessed, who have not seen, and yet believe.* You saw him not when he dwelt among men, and walked to and fro, preaching and working miracles. Many of those who did then hear and see him believed not; yea, they scoffed, and hated, and persecuted him, and in the end crucified him; you have seen none of all those things, yet having heard the gospel which declares him, *you have believed.*

Thus *observe*, the working or not working of faith doth not depend upon the difference of the external ministry and gifts of men; for what greater difference can there be that way than betwixt the master and the servants, betwixt the great prophet himself and his weak sinful messengers? and yet many of those who saw and heard him in person were not converted, believed not in him; and thousands who never saw him were converted by his apostles, and, as it seems, even some of those who were some way accessory to his death, yet were brought to repentance by this same apostle's sermon. See Acts ii.

Learn, then, to look above the outward ministry, and any difference that in God's dispensation can be there; and know, that if Jesus Christ himself were on earth, and now preaching among us, yet might his incomparable words be unprofitable to us, not being mixed with faith in the hearers. But where that is, the meanest and the most despicable conveyance of his message, received with humility and affection, will work blessed effects.

*Whom not seeing, yet believing.*] Faith elevates the soul not only above sense, and sensible things, but above reason itself. As reason corrects the errors which sense might occasion, so, supernatural faith corrects the errors of natural reason, judging according to sense.

The sun seems less than the wheel of a chariot, but reason teaches the philosopher, that it is much bigger than the whole earth, and the cause that it seems so little, is its great distance. The naturally wise man is equally deceived by this carnal reason, in his estimate of Jesus Christ *the Sun of Righteousness*, and the cause is the same, his great distance from him; as the psalmist speaks of the wicked, Psal. x. 5, *Thy judgments are far above out of his sight.* He accounts Christ and his glory a smaller matter than his own gain, honor, or pleasure; for these are near him, and he sees their quantity to

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the full, and counts them bigger, yea, far more worth than they are indeed. But the apostle St. Paul, and all who are enlightened by the same spirit, they know by faith, which is divine reason, that the excellency of Jesus Christ far surpasses the worth of the whole earth, and all things earthly. Phil. iii. 7, 8.

To give a right assent to the gospel of Christ is impossible, without divine and saving faith infused in the soul To believe that the eternal son of God clothed himself with human flesh, and dwelt among men in a tabernacle like theirs, and suffered death in the flesh: that he who was Lord of life, hath freed us from the sentence of eternal death; that he broke the bars and chains of death and rose again; that he went up into Heaven, and there at the Father's right hand sits in our flesh, and that glorified above the angels; this is the *great mystery of godliness.* And a part of this mystery is, that *he is believed on in the world.* 1 Tim. ii. 16. This natural men may discourse of, and that very knowingly, and give a kind of natural credit to it, as to a history that may be true; but firmly to believe that there is *divine truth* in all these things, and to have a persuasion of it stronger than of the very things we see with our eyes—such an assent as this is the peculiar work of the spirit of God, and is certainly saving faith.

The soul that so believes can not choose but love. It is commonly true, that the eye is the ordinary door by which love enters into the soul, and it is true in respect of this love; though it is denied of the eye of sense, yet (you see) it is ascribed to the eye of faith, *though you have not seen him, you love him, because you believe:* which is to see him spiritually. Faith, indeed, is distinguished from that vision which shall be in glory; but it is the vision of the kingdom of grace, it is the eye of the new creature, that quick-sighted eye which pierces all the visible heavens, and sees above them; which *looks to things that are not seen,* 2 Cor. iv. 18, *and is the evidence of things not seen,* Heb. xi. 1, and *sees him who is invisible,* ver. 27. It is possible that a person may be much beloved upon the report of his worth and virtues, and upon a picture of him lively drawn, before sight of the party so commended and represented; but certainly when he is seen, and found answerable to the former, it raises the affection already begun to a far greater height. We have the report of the perfections of Jesus Christ in the gospel; yea, so clear a description of him, that it gives a picture of him, and that, together with the sacraments, is the only lawful, and the only lively picture of our Savior. Gal. iii. 1. Now faith believes this report, and beholds this picture, and so lets in the love of Christ to the soul. But further, it gives a particular experimental knowledge of Christ and acquaintance with him; it causes the soul to find all that is spoken of him in the word, and his beauty there represented, to be abundantly true: makes it really taste of his sweetness, and by that possesses the heart more strongly with his love, persuading it of the truth of those things, not by reasons and arguments, but by an inexpressible kind of evidence, which they only know who have it. Faith persuades a Christian of these two things which the philosopher gives as the causes of all love, *beauty* and *propriety*, the loveliness of Christ in himself, and our interest in him.

The former it effectuates not only by the first apprehending and believing of those his excellences and beauty, but by frequent beholding of him, and eying him in whom all perfection dwells; and it looks so oft on him, till it sets the very impression of his image (as it were) upon the soul, so that it can never be blotted out and forgotten. The latter it doth by that particular *uniting* act which makes him our God and our Savior.

*Ye love.*] The distinctions which some make in *love*, need not be taken as importing different kinds, but different actings of the same love, by which we may try our so much pretended love of Christ, which in truth is so rarely found. There will then be in this love, if it be genuine, these three qualities, *good-will*, *delight*, and *desire.*

1*st. Good-will*, earnest wishing, and (as we can) promoting God's glory, and stirring up others so to do. They who *seek more their own things than the things of Jesus Christ*, more their own praise and esteem than his, are strangers to this divine love: for *she seeks not her own things.* The bitter root of self-love is most hard to pluck up; this strongest and sweetest love of Christ alone doth it actually though gradually. This love makes the soul like the lower heaven, slow in its own motion, most swift in the motion of that first which wheels it about; so, the higher degree of love the more swift. It loves the hardest tasks and greatest difficulties, where it may perform God service, either in doing or in suffering for him. *It is strong as death, and many waters can not quench it.* Eccles. viii. 6, 7. The greater the task is, the more real are the testimony and expression of love, and therefore the more acceptable to God.

2*dly.* There is in true love, a complacency and *delight* in God; a conformity to his will; a loving what he loves: it is studious of his will, ever seeking to know more clearly what it is that is most pleasing to him, contracting a likeness to God in all his actions, by conversing with him, by frequent contemplation of God, and looking on his beauty. As the eye lets in this affection, so it serves it constantly, and readily looks that way which love directs it. Thus the soul possessed with this love of Jesus Christ, the soul which hath its eye much upon him, often thinking on his former sufferings and present glory, the more it looks upon Christ, the more it loves; and still the more it loves, the more it delights to look upon him.



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3*dly*. There is in true love a *desire;* for it is but small beginnings and tastes of his goodness which the soul hath here; therefore it is still looking out and longing for the day of marriage. The time is sad and wearisome, and seems much longer than it is, while it is detained here. *I desire to be dissolved* (saith St. Paul) *and to be with Christ.* Phil. i. 23.

God is the sum of all things lovely. Thus excellently Gregory Nazianzen expresseth himself, Orat. 1. "If I have any possessions, health, credit, learning, this is all the contentment I have of them, that I have somewhat I may despise for Christ, who is *totus desiderabilis, et totum desiderabile* (the all-desirable one, the everything desirable)." And this love is the sum of all he requires of us; it is that which makes all our meanest services acceptable, and without which all we offer to him is distasteful. God doth deserve our love, not only by his matchless excellency and beauty, but by his matchless love to us, and that is the strongest loadstone of love. *He hath loved me*, saith the apostle, Gal. ii. 20. How appears that? In no less than this, *He hath given himself for me.* Certainly, then, there is no clearer character of our love than this, to give ourselves to him who hath so loved us, and given himself for us.

This affection must be bestowed somewhere: there is no man but hath some prime choice, somewhat that is the predominant delight of his soul; will it not then be our wisdom to make the worthiest choice? seeing it is offered us, it is extreme folly to reject it.

Grace doth not pluck up by the roots and wholly destroy the natural passions of the mind, because they are distempered by sin! that were an extreme remedy to cure by killing, and heal by cutting off; no, but it corrects the distemper in them; it dries not up this main stream of love, but purifies it from the mud which it is full of in its wrong course, or turns it into its right channel, by which it may run into happiness, and empty itself into the ocean of goodness. The Holy Spirit turns the love of the soul toward God in Christ, for in that way only can it apprehend his love; so then Jesus Christ is the first *object* of this divine love; he is *medium unionis*, through whom God conveys the sense of his love to the soul, and receives back its love to himself.

And if we will consider his incomparable beauty, we may look on it in the Holy Scriptures, particularly in that divine song of loves, wherein Solomon borrows all the beauties of the creatures, dips his pencil in all their several excellences, to set him forth unto us, who is the *chief of ten thousands.* There is an inseparable intermixture of love with belief and a pious affection, in receiving divine truth; so that in effect, as we distinguish them, they are mutually strengthened, the one by the other, and so, though it seem a circle, it is a divine one, and falls not under censure of the school's pedantry. If you ask, How shall I do to *love?* I answer, *believe.* If you ask, How shall I *believe?* I answer, *love.* Although the expressions to a carnal mind are altogether unsavory, by grossly mistaking them, yet, to a soul taught to read and hear them, by any measure of that same spirit of love wherewith they were penned, they are full of heavenly and unutterable sweetness.

Many directions as to the means of begetting and increasing this love of Christ may be here offered, and they who delight in number may multiply them; but surely this one will comprehend the greatest and best part, if not all of them; *believe, and you shall love; believe much, and you shall love much;* labor for strong and deep persuasions of the glorious things which are spoken of Christ, and this will command love. Certainly, did men indeed believe his worth, they would accordingly love him; for the reasonable creature can not but affect that most which it firmly believes to be worthiest of affection. O! this mischievous unbelief is that which makes the heart cold and dead toward God. Seek then to believe Christ's excellency in himself, and his love to us, and our interest in him, and this will kindle such a fire in the heart, as will make it ascend in a sacrifice of love to him.

The signs likewise of this love may be multiplied according to the many fruits and workings of it; but in them all, itself is its own most infallible evidence. When the soul finds that all its obedience and endeavor to keep the commands of Jesus Christ, which himself makes its character, do flow from love, then it is true and sincere; for do or suffer what you will, without love all passes for nothing; all are ciphers without it, they signify nothing. 1 Cor. xiii.

This is the message of the gospel, and that which the ministry aims at; and therefore the ministers ought to be suiters, not for themselves, but for Christ, to espouse souls to him, and to bring in many hearts to love him. And certainly, this is the most compendious way to persuade to all other Christian duties, for this is to converse with Jesus Christ, and where his love is, no other incentive will be needful; for love delights in the presence and converse of the party loved. If we are to persuade to duties of the second table, the sum of those is, love to our brethren, resulting from the love of Christ, which diffuseth such a sweetness into the soul, that it is all love, and meekness, and gentleness, and long suffering.

If times be for suffering, love will make the soul not only bear, but welcome the bitterest afflictions of life, and the hardest kinds of death for his sake. In a word, there is in love a sweet constraint, or tying of the heart to all obedience and duty.

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The love of God is requisite in ministers for their preaching of the word; so our Savior to St. Peter, John xxi. 15, *Peter, lovest thou me? then feed my lambs.* It is requisite for the people that they receive the truth in the love of it, and that Christ preached may be entertained in the soul, and embraced by faith and love.

You that have made choice of Christ for your love, let not your hearts slip out, to renew your wonted base familiarity with sin; for that will bring new bitterness to your souls, and at least for some time deprive you of the sensible favor of your beloved Jesus. Delight always in God, and give him your whole heart; for he deserves it all, and is a satisfying good to it. The largest heart is all of it too strait for the riches of consolation which he brings with him. Seek to increase in this love; and though it is at first weak, yet labor to find it daily rise higher, and burn hotter and clearer, and consume the dross of earthly desires.

*Receiving the end of your faith.*] Although the soul that believes and loves, is put in present possession of God, as far as it is capable in its sojourning here, yet it desires a full enjoyment, which it can not attain to without removing hence. *While we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord,* saith the apostle. And because they are assured of that happy exchange, that being untied and freed of this body, they shall be present with the Lord, having his own word for it, that *where he is they shall be also;* this begets such an assured hope, as bears the name of *possession.* Therefore it is said here, *receiving the end of your faith.*

This receiving likewise flows from faith. Faith apprehends the present truth of the divine promises, and so makes the things to come, present; and hope looks out to their after-accomplishment, which, if the promises be true, as faith avers, then hope hath good reason firmly to expect. This desire and hope are the very wheels of the soul which carry it on, and faith is the common axis on which they rest.

In these words there are two things: 1. The good hoped for in Christ so believed on and loved; 2. The assuredness of the hope itself; yea, it is as sure as if it were already accomplished.

I. as for the good hoped for, it consists, 1. In the nature of it, *viz.*, the *salvation of their soul;* 2. In a relative property of it, *the end of their faith.*

1*st.* The nature of it is, *salvation, and salvation of the soul:* it imports full deliverance from all kinds of misery, and the safe possession of perfect happiness, when the soul shall be out of the reach of all adversities, and adverse accidents, no more subjected to those evils which are properly its own, namely, the conscience of sin, and fear of wrath and sad defections; nor yet subject to those other evils which it endured by society with the body—outward distresses and afflictions, persecutions, poverty, diseases, &c

It is called *salvation of the soul:* not excluding the body from the society of that glory, when it shall be raised and reunited to the soul; but because the soul is of itself an immortal substance, and both the more noble part of man, and the prime subject both of grace and glory, and because it arrives first at that blessedness, and for a time leaves the body in the dust to do homage to its original; therefore it is alone named here. But Jesus is the Savior of the body too, and he shall, at his coming, *change our vile bodies, and make them like his glorious body.*

2*dly.* We have the relative property of this hope,—*the end of your faith,* the *end* or *reward;* for it is both. It is the *end,* either at which faith aims, or wherein it ceaseth. It is the *reward,* not of their works, nor of faith, as a work deserving it, but as the condition of the new covenant, which God, according to the tenor of that covenant, first works in his own, and then rewards as if it were their work. And this salvation, or fruition of Christ is the proper reward of faith, which believes in him unseen, and so obtains that happy sight. It is the proper work of faith to believe what thou seest not, and the reward of faith, to see what thou hast believed.

II. This is the certainty of their hope, that it is as if they had already received it. If the promise of God and the merit of Christ hold good, then they who believe in him, and love him, are made sure of salvation. The promises of God in Christ *are not yea and nay,, but they are in him yea, and in him amen.* Sooner may the rivers run backward, and the course of the heavens change, and the frame of nature be dissolved, than any one soul that is united to Christ Jesus by faith and love, can be severed from him, and so fall short of the salvation hoped for in him; and this is the matter of their rejoicing.

*Ye rejoice with joy unspeakable.*] *The natural man,* says the apostle, *receiveth not the things of God, for they are foolishness unto him;* and he adds the reason why he can not know them, *for they are spiritually discerned.* He hath none of that faculty by which they are discerned. There is a vast disproportion betwixt those things and nature's highest capacity; it can not work beyond its sphere. Speak to the natural man, of the matter of spiritual grief, the sense of guiltiness, and the apprehension of God's displeasure, or the hiding of his favor and the light of his countenance from the soul; these things stir not him, he knows not what they mean. Speak to him again of the peace of conscience, and sense of God's love, and the joy that arises hence; he is no less a stranger to that. *Mourn to him, and he laments not; pipe to him and he dances not,* as our Savior speaks, Matt. xi. 17. But as it there follows, ver. 19, there is a wisdom in

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these things, though they seem folly and nonsense to the foolish world, and this *wisdom is justified of her own children.*

Having said somewhat already of the causes of this spiritual joy, which the apostle here speaks of, it remains that we consider these two things; 1. How joy ariseth from these causes; 2. The excellency of this joy, as it is here expressed.

There is here a solid sufficient good, and the heart made sure of it, being partly put in present possession of it, and having a most certain hope of all the rest. And what more can be required to make it joyful? Jesus Christ, the treasure of all blessings, received and united to the soul, by faith, and love, and hope!

Is not Christ the light and joy of the nations? such a light as Abraham, at the distance of many ages, of more than two thousand years, yet saw by faith, and seeing, rejoiced in. Besides this brightness, which makes light a joyful object, light is often in Scripture put for joy. Christ, who is this light, brings salvation with him: he is the *sun of righteousness*, and there is *healing under his wings. I bring you*, said the angel, *good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all people.* And their song hath in it the matter of that joy, *Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will toward men.* Luke ii. 10, 14.

But to the end we may rejoice in Christ, we must find him ours: otherwise, the more excellent he is, the more cause hath the heart to be sad, while it hath no portion in him. *My spirit hath rejoiced* (said the blessed Virgin) *in God my Savior.* Luke i. 47.

Thus, having spoken of our communion with Christ, the apostle adds, 1 John i. 7, *These things I write that your joy may be full.* Faith worketh this joy by uniting the soul to Christ, and applying his merits, from the application of which arises the pardon of sin; and so that load of misery, which was the great cause of sorrow, is removed; and so soon as the soul finds itself lightened and unloaded of that burden which was sinking it to hell, it can not choose but leap for joy, in the ease and refreshment it finds. Therefore that Psalm which David begins with the doctrine of the pardon of sin, he ends with an exhortation to *rejoicing. Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered:* Psal. xxxii. 1: thus he begins, but he ends, *Be glad in the Lord and rejoice ye righteous, and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.* St. Peter speaks to his hearers of the remission of sins, Acts ii. 38, and at ver. 41, it is added, *They received his words gladly.* And our Savior joins these two together, *Be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven thee.* Thus, Isaiah lxi. 1, good tidings of liberty to captives are proclaimed, and a notable change there is of their estate *who mourn in Zion, giving them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the Spirit of heaviness.* Think with what joy the long-imprisoned debtor drowned in debt, receives a full discharge, and his liberty; or a condemned malefactor the news of his pardon, and this will somewhat resemble it, but yet fall far short of the joy which faith brings by bringing Christ to the soul, and so forgiveness of sins in him.

But this is not all. This believing soul is not only a debtor acquitted and set free, but enriched besides with a new and great estate: not only a pardoned malefactor, but withal highly preferred and advanced to honor, having a right, by the promises, *to the unsearchable riches of Christ*, as the apostle speaks, and is received into favor with God, and unto the dignity of sonship, taken *from the dunghill, and set with princes.* Psal. cxiii. 8.

As there is joy from faith, so also from love. Though this is in itself the most sweet and delightful passion of the soul, yet, as we foolishly misplace it, it proveth often full of bitterness; but being set upon Jesus Christ, the only right and worthy object, it causeth this unspeakable delight and rejoicing.

First, It is matter of joy to have bestowed our love so worthily. When our Savior seems to withdraw himself, and sometimes saddens the soul that loves him, with *absences*, in regard of sense, yet even in those sad times, the soul delights to love him, and there is a pleasure in the very pains it hath in seeking after him. And this it knows, that his mercies are everlasting, and that he can not be long unkind, but will return and speak comfortably unto it.

Secondly, Our love to Christ gives us assurance of his to us, so that we have not only chosen worthily, but shall not be frustrated and disappointed; and it assures us of his, not as following, but as preceding and causing ours; for our love to Jesus Christ is no other than the reflex of his on us. *Wine maketh glad the heart*, but *thy love is better than wine*, saith the Spouse. And having this persuasion, that he *hath loved us and washed us in his blood*, and forgets us not in our conflicts; that though he himself is in his glory, yet that he intercedes for us there, and will bring us thither, what condition can befall us so hard, but we may rejoice in it, and in them, so far as we are sure to arrive at that full salvation and the fruition of him who hath purchased it?

Then there is the third cause of our rejoicing, *viz.*, our *hope.* Now hope is our *anchor fixed within the veil*, which stays us against all the storms that beat upon us in this troublesome sea that we are tossed upon. The soul which strongly believes and loves, may confidently hope to see what it believes, and to enjoy what it loves, and in that it may rejoice. It may say, whatsoever hazards, whether outward or inward, whatsoever afflictions and temptations I endure, yet this one thing puts me out of hazard, and in that

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I will rejoice, that the salvation of my soul depends not upon my own strength, but is in my Savior's hand: *My life is hid with Christ in God; and when he who is my life shall appear, I likewise shall appear with him in glory.* The childish world are hunting shadows, and gaping and hoping after they know not what; but the believer can say, *I know whom I have trusted, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.* Now we must have not only a right to these things, but withal there must be frequent consideration of them to produce joy. The soul must often view them, and so rejoice. *My meditation of him shall be sweet,* saith David. *I will be glad in the Lord,* Psal. civ. 34. The godly, failing in this, deprive themselves of much of that joy they might have; and they who are most in these sublime thoughts have the highest and truest joy.

The excellency of this joy, the apostle here expresseth by these two words, *unspeakable* and *full of glory.*

That it is *unspeakable,* no wonder, seeing the matter of it is inconceivable; it is an infinite good. God reconciled in Jesus Christ, and testifying and sealing his love unto the soul, and giving assured hope of that blessed vision of eternity,—what more unspeakable than this? And for the same reason it is *glorious,* or glorified joy, having the highest and most glorious object; for it derives all its excellency thence.

*Unspeakable.*] The best worldly joys are easily speakable; they may be expressed to the utmost, yea, usually more is spoken of them than they are indeed. Their name is beyond their worth; they are very seldom found, upon experience, equal to the opinion and expectation that men have of them. But this spiritual joy is above the report any can can make of it; say what they can of it who are of happiest expression, yet when a man comes to know it in his own breast, he will say (as that queen said of Solomon's wisdom), *the half was not told me of it!*

Again, earthly joys are inglorious; many of which men are ashamed of, and those that seem most plausible, yet are below the excellency of the soul, and can not fill it; but the joys which arise from union with Christ, as they are most avowable, a man needs not blush to own them,—so they are truly contenting and satisfying, and that is their glory, and the cause why we may glory in them, *My soul shall make her boast in God,* says David. Psal. xxxiv. 2.

For *application* of all this. If these things were believed, we should hearken no more to the foolish prejudice which the world hath taken up against religion, and wherewith Satan endeavors to possess men's hearts, that they may be scared from the ways of holiness: they think it a sour, melancholy life, which hath nothing but sadness and mourning in it. But, to remove this prejudice,

Consider 1. Religion debars not from the lawful delights which are taken in natural things, but teaches the moderate and regular use of them, which is far the sweeter; for things lawful in themselves are in their excess sinful, and so prove bitterness in the end. And if in some cases it requires the forsaking of lawful enjoyments, as of pleasure, or profits, or honor, for God and for his glory, it is generous and more truly delightful to deny them for this reason, than to enjoy them. Men have done much this way for the love of their country, and by a principle of moral virtue; but to lose any delight, or to suffer any hardship for that highest end —the glory of God, and by the strength of love to him, is far more excellent, and truly pleasant.

2. The delights and pleasures of sin, religion indeed banishes, but it is to change them for this joy that is unspeakably beyond them. It calls men from sordid and base delights to those that are pure delights indeed: it calls to men, Drink ye no longer of the puddle, here are the crystal streams of a living fountain. There is a delight in the very despising of impure delights; as St. Augustine exclaims, *Quàm suave est istis suavitatibus carere! How pleasant is it to want these pleasures!* But for such a change, to have in their stead such delights, as that in comparison the other deserve not the name; to have such spiritual joy as shall end in eternal joy; it is a wonder we hasten not all to choose this joy, but it is indeed because we believe it not.

3. It is true, the godly are subject to great distresses and afflictions; but their joy is not extinguished by them, no, nor diminished neither, but often sensibly increased. When they have least of the world's joy, they abound most in spiritual consolations, and then relish them best. They find them sweetest, when their taste is not depraved by earthly enjoyments. *We rejoice in tribulation,* says St. Paul: and here our apostle insists on that, to verify the substance of this joy in the midst of the greatest afflictions.

4. Spiritual grief, which seems most opposite to this spiritual joy, excludeth it not, for there is a secret delight and sweetness in the tears of repentance, a balm in them that refreshes the soul; and even their saddest kind of mourning, *viz.*, the dark times of desertion, hath this in it, which is someway sweet, that those mournings after their beloved, who absents himself, are a mark of their love to him, and a true evidence of it. And then all these spiritual sorrows, of what nature soever, are turned into spiritual joy; that is the proper end of them; they have a natural tendency that way.

5. But the natural man still doubts of this joy we speak of; because he sees and hears so little of it from them who profess to have it, and seem to have the best right to it. If we consider the wretchedness of this life, and

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especially the abundance of sin that is in the world, what wonder though this their joy retire much inward, and appear little abroad, where all things are so contrary to it, and so far are capable of it, to whom it were pertinent to vent it? Again, we see here, it is *unspeakable;* it were a poor thing if he that hath it could tell it all out. *Pauperis est numerare pecus.* And when the soul hath most of it, then it remains most within itself, and is so inwardly taken up with it, that possibly it can then least of all express it. It is with joys, as they say of cares and griefs, *Leves loquuntur ingentes stupent.* The deepest waters run stillest. *Res severa est verum gaudium,* says Seneca. True joy is a solid, grave thing, dwells more in the heart than in the countenance: whereas, on the contrary, base and false joys are but superficial, skin-deep (as we say); they are all in the face.

Think not that it is with the godly, as the prophet says of the wicked, that *there is no peace* to them. The *Septuagint* reads it, *no joy;* certainly it is true; there is no true joy to the wicked: they may revel and make a noise, but they rejoice not; *The laughter of the fool is as the crackling of thorns under the pot,* a great noise but little heat, and soon at an end. There is no continuing feast, but that of *a good conscience.* Wickedness and real joy can not dwell together, as the very moralist Seneca hath it often, and at large. But he that can say, The righteousness of Jesus Christ is mine, and in him the favor of God, and the hope of eternal happiness, hath such a light as can shine in the darkest dungeon, yea, in the *dark valley of the shadow of death itself.*

Say not thou, If I betake myself to the way of godliness, I must did farewell to gladness, never a merry day more; no, on the contrary, never a truly joyful day till then, yea, no days at all, but night to the soul, till it entertain Jesus Christ and his kingdom, which consists in *righteousness, peace,* and *joy in the Holy Ghost.* Thou dost not sacrifice Isaac, which signifies laughter (as St. Bernard has it), but a ram; not your joy, but filthy sinful delights which end in sorrow.

Oh! seek to know in your experience what those joys mean; for all describing and commending them to you will not make you understand them; but *taste, and see that the Lord is good; Lauda mellis dulcedinem quantum potes, qui non gustaverit, non intelliget,* says Augustine; *Praise the sweetness of honey to the utmost, he who has never tasted it, can not understand it.* You can not see and know this goodness, but by tasting it; and having tasted it, all those poor joys you thought sweet before, will then be bitter and distasteful to you.

And you that have Christ yours by believing, know your happiness, and rejoice, and glory in it. Whatsoever is your outward condition, *rejoice always, and again I say rejoice,* for *light is sown to the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.* Phil. iv. 4; Psal. xcvii. 11.

VER. 10. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired, and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you.

VER. 11. Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when he testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

VER. 12. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, which things the angels desire to look into.

IT is the ignorance, or at least the inconsideration of Divine things, that makes earthly things, whether good or evil, appear great in our eyes; therefore the apostle's great aim is, by representing the certainty and excellency of the belief and hope of Christians to his afflicted brethren, to strengthen their minds against all discouragements and oppositions; that they may account nothing too hard to do or suffer for so high a cause and so happy an end. It is the low and mean thoughts, and the shallow persuasion we have of things that are spiritual, that is the cause of all our remissness and coldness in them. The doctrine of salvation, mentioned in the former verse as the end of our Christian faith, is illustrated in these words, from its antiquity, dignity, and infallible truth.

It is no modern invention; for the prophets inquired after it, and foretold it in former ages from the beginning. Thus the prejudice of novelty is removed, which usually meets the most ancient truth in its new discoveries.

Again, it is no mean thing that such men as were of unquestioned eminency in wisdom and holiness, did so much study and search after, and having found it out, were careful not only to publish it in their own times, but to record it to posterity; and this not by the private motion of their own spirits, but by the acting and guidance of the Spirit of God; which likewise sets the truth of their testimony above all doubtfulness and uncertainty.

But taking the three verses entirely together, we have in them these three things, testifying how excellent the doctrine of the gospel is. 1. We have the principal author of it. 2. The matter of it. 3. The worth of those who are exercised about it, *viz.,* the best of men, the prophets and apostles, in administering it, and the best of all the creatures, the angels, in admiring it.

1. The first author is the absolutely *first,* Spirit of God in the prophets, ver. 11, in the apostles, ver. 12. But the Spirit of Christ, in ver. 11, is the same spirit that he sent down on his disciples after his ascending to glory, and which spoke in his prophets before his descending to the earth. It is the Spirit of Christ, proceeding jointly from him with the Father, as he is the Son of God, and

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dwelling most richly and fully in him as the Son of man.

The Holy Ghost is in himself holiness, and the source and worker of holiness, and author of this holy doctrine which breathes nothing but holiness, and urges it most pressingly upon all that receive it.

This is the very life of divine faith, touching the mysteries of salvation, firmly to believe their *revelation* by the Spirit of God. This the word itself testifies, as we see; and it is really manifest in it; he carries the lively stamp of Divine inspiration, but there must be a spiritual eye to discern it. He that is blind, knows not that the sun shines at noon, but by the report of others; but they that see, are assured they see it, and assured by no other thing but its own light. To ask one who is a true believer, How know you the Scriptures to be Divine? is the same as to ask him, How know you light to be light?

The soul is nothing but darkness and blindness within, till that same Spirit that shines without in the word, shines likewise within it, and effectually makes it light; but that once done, then is the word read with some measure of the same spirit by which it was written, and the soul is ascertained that it is Divine; as in bodily sight, there must be a meeting of inward light, *viz.*, the visual spirits with the outward *object*.

The spirit of God within, brings evidence with it, and makes itself discernible in the word; this all arguments, all books and study, can not attain unto. *It is given to believe*, 1 Phil. i. 29.

*No man knows the things of a man but the spirit of man*, 1 Cor. ii. 11. But how holds that here? For if a man speak out the things that are in his spirit, then others may know them; but the apostle's aim there, is to conclude that the things of God, even such as were revealed in his word, could not be known but by his own Spirit; so that though revealed, yet they remain still unrevealed till the Spirit teach within, as well as without; because they are intelligible by none, but by those who are the private scholars and hearers of the Holy Ghost, the author of them; and because there are so few of these, therefore there is so little real believing amid all the noise and profession that we make of it. Who is there (if you will believe them) that believes not? And yet truly there is too much cause to continue the prophet's regret, Isaiah liii. 1, *Who hath believed our report?*

Learn then to suspect yourselves, and to find out your own unbelief, that you may desire this Spirit to teach you inwardly those great mysteries which he outwardly reveals and teaches by his word. Make use of that promise, and press the Lord with it, *They shall be all taught of God*, Isaiah liv. 13; and John vi. 45.

But, II. There is here the *matter* of this doctrine, which we have in three several expressions, 1. That which is repeated from the foregoing verse; it is the *Doctrine of Salvation*, that is the end of it. 2. The *Doctrine of the sufferings and glory of Christ*, as the means. And 3. *The Doctrine of grace*, the spring of both.

1. It is the doctrine of *salvation*, the only true doctrine of true happiness, which the wisest of natural men have groped and sought after with much earnestness, but with no success; they had no other than the dark moonlight of nature, and that is not sufficient to find it out; only the Sun of Righteousness shining in the sphere of the gospel, *brings life and immortality to light*, 2 Tim. i. 10. No wonder that natural wisdom, the deepest of it, is far from finding out the true method and way of cure, seeing it can not discover the disease of miserable mankind. *viz.*, the sinful and wretched condition of nature by the first disobedience.

*Salvation* expresses not only that which is negative, but implies likewise positive and perfect happiness; thus forgiveness of sins is put for the whole nature of justification frequently in Scripture. It is more easy to say of this unspeakable happiness, what it is not, than what it is. There is in it a full and final freedom from all annoyance; all tears are wiped away, and their fountain is dried up; all feeling and fear, or danger, of any the least evil, either of sin or punishment, is banished for ever; there are no invasions of enemies, no robbing or destroying in all this holy mountain, no voice of complaining in the streets of the new Jerusalem. Here it is at the best but interchanges of mornings of joy, with sad evenings of weepings; but there, there shall be no light, no need of sun nor moon, *For the glory of the Lord shall lighten it, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof*, Rev. xxi. 23.

Well may the apostle (as he doth here throughout this chapter) lay this salvation to counterbalance all sorrows and persecutions, and whatsoever hardships can be in the way to it. The soul that is persuaded of this, in the midst of storms and tempests enjoys a calm, triumphs in disgraces, grows richer by all its losses, and by death itself attains this immortal life.

Happy are they who have their eye fixed upon this salvation, and are longing and waiting for it; who see so much of that brightness and glory, as darkens all the lustre of earthly things to them, and makes them trample upon those things which formerly they admired and doated on with the rest of the fooish world. Those things we account so much of, are but as rotten wood, or glow-worms that shine only in the night of our ignorance and vanity: so soon as the light-beam of this salvation enters into the soul, it can not much esteem or affect anything below it; and if those glances of it which shine in the word, and in the soul of a Christian, be so bright

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and powerful, what then shall the full sight and real possession of it be?

2. The gospel is represented as the *Doctrine of the sufferings and glory of Christ, as the means of salvation.* The worker of this salvation, whom the prophets and apostles make the sum of all their doctrine, is Jesus Christ, and the sum of that work of redemption (as we have it here), is his humiliation and exaltation; his sufferings, and the glory that followed thereupon. Now, though this serve as an encouragement to Christians in their sufferings, that this is the way by which their Lord went into his glory, and is true also of Christ mystical, the head with the members, as the Scriptures often teach us, yet I conceive it is here mainly intended as a summary of the work of our redemption by Jesus Christ, relating to the salvation mentioned ver. 10, and as the cause for the effect, so it is put for it here. The prophets inquired, and prophesied of that salvation. How? By searching out, and foretelling the sufferings and glory of Christ. His sufferings, then, and his after-glories are our salvation. His suffering is the purchase of our salvation, and his glory is our assurance of it; he as our head having triumphed, and being crowned, makes us likewise sure of victory and triumph. His having entered on the possession of glory, makes our hope certain. This is his prayer, *That where he is, there we may be also;* and this is his own assertion, *The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them*, John xvii. 22, 24. This is his promise, *Because I live, ye shall live also*, John xiv. 19. Christ and the believer are one; this is that great mystery the apostle speaks of, Eph. v. 30. Though it is a common known truth, the words and outside of it obvious to all, yet none can understand it but they who indeed partake of it. By virtue of that union, their sins were accounted his, and Christ's sufferings are accounted theirs, and by consequence, his glory, the consequent of his suffering, is likewise theirs. There is an indissoluble connexion between the life of Christ, and of a believer. *Our life is hid with Christ in God;* and therefore while we remain there, our life is there, though hid, *and when he who is our life shall appear, we likewise shall appear with him in glory*, Coloss. iii. 3, 4. Seeing the sufferings and glory of our Redeemer are the main subject of the gospel, and the causes of our salvation, and of our comfortable persuasion of it, it is a wonder that they are not more the matter of our thoughts. Ought we not daily to consider the bitterness of that cup of wrath be drank for us, and be wrought to repentance and hatred of sin, to have sin imbittered to us by that consideration, and find the sweetness of his love in that he did drink it, and by that, be deeply possessed with love to him? These things we now and then speak of, but they sink not into our minds, as our Savior exhorts, where he is speaking of those same sufferings. O! that they were engraven on our hearts, and that sin were crucified in us, and *the world crucified to us, and we unto the world*, by the cross of Christ! Gal. vi. 14.

And let us be frequently considering the glory wherein he is, and have our eye often upon that, and our hearts solacing and refreshing themselves frequently with the thoughts of that place, and condition wherein Christ is, and where our hopes are, ere long, to behold him; both to see his glory, and to be glorified with him, is it not reason? Yea, it is necessary, it can not be otherwise, if our treasure, and Head be there, that our hearts be there likewise, Matt. vi. 21; Coloss. iii. 1, 2.

The third expression here of the gospel, is, That *it is the doctrine of grace.* The work of redemption itself and the several parts of it, and the doctrine revealing it, have all the name of grace; because they all flow from free grace; that is their spring and first cause.

And it is this wherein the doctrine of salvation is mainly comfortable, that it is free: *Ye are saved by grace*, Eph. ii. 8. It is true, God requires faith, it is *through faith;* but he that require that, gives it too: *That is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*, Eph. ii. 8. It is wonderful grace to save upon believing; believe in Jesus for salvation, and live accordingly, and it is done; there is no more required to thy pardon, but that thou receive it by faith. But truly nature can not do this; it is as impossible for us of ourselves to believe, as to do. This then is that which makes it all grace from beginning to end, that God not only saves upon believing, but gives believing itself. Christ is called not only the *Author and Finisher* of our salvation, but even *of our faith*, Heb. xii. 2.

Free grace being rightly apprehended, is that which stays the heart in all estates, and keeps it from fainting, even in its saddest times. What though there is nothing in myself but matter of sorrow and discomfort, it can not be otherwise; it is not from myself that I look for comfort at any time, but from my God and his free grace. Here is comfort enough for all times; when I am at the best, I ought not, I dare not, rely upon myself; when I am at the worst, I may, and should rely upon Christ, and his sufficient grace. Though I be the vilest sinner that ever came to him, yet I know that he is more gracious than I am sinful; yea, the more my sin is, the more glory will it be to his grace to pardon it; it will appear the richer. Doth not David argue thus, Psal. xxv. 11: *For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is very great.* But it is an empty fruitless notion of grace to consider it only in the general, and in a wandering way: we are to look upon it particularly, as addressed to us; and it is not enough that it comes to us, in the message of him that brings it only to our ear, but, that we may know what it is, it must come into us; then it is ours indeed. But if it come to us in the message only, and we send it away again, if it shall so depart, we had better

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never have heard of it; it will leave a guiltiness behind it, that shall make all our sins weigh much heavier than before.

Inquire whether you have entertained this grace or not; whether it be come to you, and into you, or not; whether the *kingdom of God is within you*, as our Savior speaks, Luke xvii. 21. It is the most woful condition that can be, not to be far from the kingdom of God, and yet to fall short, and miss of it. The grace of God revealed in the gospel is entreating you daily to receive it, is willing to become yours, if you reject it not. Were your eyes open to behold the beauty and excellency of this grace, there would need no deliberation; yea, you would endure none. Desire your eyes to be opened, and enlightened from above, that you may know it, and your hearts opened, that you may be happy by receiving it.

The apostle, speaking of Jesus Christ as the foundation of our faith, calls him *The same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever.* Heb. xiii. 8. *Yesterday*, under the law, *to-day*, in those primitive times, nearest his incarnation, and *for ever*, in all succeeding ages. And the resemblance holds good between the two cherubim over the mercy-seat, and the two testaments: *those* had their faces toward one another, and both toward the mercy-seat; and *these* look to one another in their doctrine, agreeing perfectly, and both look to Christ, the true mercy-seat, and the great subject of the Scriptures. Thus we see here: the things which the prophets foretold as to come, and the apostles reported were accomplished, were the same, and from the same Spirit; they were the *sufferings of Christ*, and *his after glory*, and in them our salvation by free grace. The prophecies look forward to the times of the gospel; and the things then fulfilled, look back to the prophecies; and each confirms the other, meeting all in Christ, who is their truth and centre.

We have spoken already of the author, and subject of this salvation. Now we come to say something, III. Concerning the worth of those who are employed about it, as well in administering to it, as in admiring it. And these are the prophets and the apostles: the first foretold what was to come, the second preached them when they came to pass.

In the prophets, there are three things here remarked. 1. Their diligence. 2. The success of it. 3. The extent of its usefulness.

1. This their diligence disparages not their extraordinary visions and revelations, and that which is added, that the spirit of Christ was in them, and did foretell the things to come.

It was their constant duty, and they being sensible of their duty, made it their constant exercise, to search into divine mysteries by meditation and prayer; yea, and by reading such holy writers as were already extant in their times, as Daniel ix, 3; x. 11. For which cause, some, taking the word actively, conceive Daniel to be called there a *man of desires*, because of his great desire, and diligent search after the knowledge of those high things. And in this diligent way they constantly waited for those revelations which sometimes, when it seemed good unto the spirit of God, were imparted unto them.

"Prophecy resideth not," say the Hebrew doctors, "but in a man who is great in wisdom and virtue, whose affections overcome him not in any worldly things, but by his knowledge he overcometh his affections continually: on such a man the Holy Spirit cometh down, and his soul is associated to the angels, and he is changed to another man." Thus Maimonides.

It was the way of the prince of darkness among the idolatrous Gentiles, to speak either through senseless statues, or, where he uttered his oracles by such profane prophets as he had, to cause them in a fury to mumble forth words which they understood not, and knew not what they said. But the Spirit of God being *light*, and the holy prophets inspired with it, they being diligent attendants on its motions, and searchers of the mysteries of salvation, understood well what their business was, and to what purpose those things of the kingdom of Christ tended, which they by inspiration did foretell; and therefore bended their thoughts this way, praying, and searching, and waiting for answers, studying to keep the passage, as it were, open for the beams of those divine revelations to come in at; not to have their spirits clogged and stopped with earthly and sinful affections, endeavoring for that calm and quiet composure of spirit in which the voice of God's spirit might be the better heard. See Psal. lxxx. 8, and Hab. ii. 1; in both which places follows an excellent prophecy concerning Christ and that salvation which he wrought for his people.

Were the prophets not exempted from the pains of search and inquiry, who had the spirit of God not only in a high measure, but after a singular manner? How unbeseeming, then, are slothfulness and idleness in us! Whether is it, that we judge ourselves advantaged with more of the Spirit than those holy men, or that we esteem the doctrines and mysteries of salvation, on which they bestowed so much of their labor, unworthy of ours? These are both so gross, that we shall be loath to own either of them; and yet our laziness and negligence in searching after these things, seem to charge us with some such thought as one of those.

You will say, this concerns those who succeed to the work of the prophets and apostles in ordinary,—the ministers of the gospel. And it doth indeed fall first upon them. It is their task indeed to be diligent, and, as the apostle exhorts his Timothy, *to attend on reading*, 1 Tim. iv. 13; but, above all, to study to have much experimental knowledge of God and his Son, Jesus Christ; and for



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this end, to disentangle and free themselves, as much as is possible, from lower things, in order to the search of heavenly mysteries. Prov. xviii. 1. As they are called *angels*, so ought they to be, as much as they can attain to it, in a constant nearness unto God, and attendance on him, like unto the angels, and to look much into these things as the angels here are said to do; to endeavor to have their souls purified from the affections of sin, that the light of divine truth may shine clear in them, and not be fogged and misted with filthy vapors; to have the impressions of God clearly written in their breasts, not mixed and blurred with earthly characters; seasoning all their readings and common studies with much prayer and divine meditation. They who converse most with the king, and are inward with him, know most of the affairs of state, and even the secrets of them, which are hid from others; and certainly those of God's messengers who are oftenest with himself, can not but understand their business best, and know most of his meaning, and the affairs of his kingdom; and to that end it is confessed that singular diligence is required in them. But seeing the Lord hath said, without exception, that *his secret is with them that fear him*, Psalm xxv. 14, and that he will reveal himself and his saving truths to those that humbly seek them; do not any of you do yourselves so much injury as to debar yourselves from sharing in your measure of the search of these things, which were the study of the prophets, and which by their study and publishing them, are made the more accessible and easy to us. Consider that they do concern us universally, if we would be saved; for it is salvation here that they studied. *Search the scriptures*, says our Savior, John v. 39, and that is the motive, if there can be any that may be thought in reason pressing enough, or if we do indeed think so, *For in them ye think to have eternal life*. And it is there to be found: Christ is this *salvation* and this *eternal life*. And he adds further, *It is they* (these scriptures) *that testify of me*. These are the golden mines in which alone the abiding treasures of eternity are to be found, and therefore worthy all the digging and pains we can bestow on them.

Besides their *industry* in this inquiry and *search*, there are here expressed their ardent affection to the thing they prophesied of, and their longings and wishes for its accomplishment, viz., the coming of Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, the top of all their desires, the great hope and the light of Israel. No wonder they *desired his day*, who had so much joy in the seeing it so far off, as over the head almost of two thousand years. Faith overlooking them, and foreseeing it so in Abraham, his heart danced for joy. John viii. 56. *Abraham saw my day and rejoiced.*

And this is conceived to be the meaning of those expressions in that mystical song, as they suit those times of the Jewish church, breathing out her longings for the coming of her beloved. His speaking by the prophets was his voice as afar off; but his incarnation was his coming near, and kissing his church *with the kisses of his mouth*. Cant. i. 1. And to omit other expressions throughout the song, the last chapter, ver. 1, is tender and pathetical: *O! that thou wert as my brother*, &c.; and the last words of it, *Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices*. And when this salvation came in the fulness of time, we see how joyfully good old Simeon embraces it, and thought he had seen enough, and therefore upon the sight desired to have his eyes closed: *Now let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.* Luke ii. 29. Therefore our Savior says to his apostles, Matt. xiii. 16, *Blessed are your eyes, for they see, for many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them.* This is he whom we disesteem and make so small account of, being now so clearly revealed, whom they studied, and sought, and wished so much for, so many ages before.

2*dly*. The *success* of their search is remarked; in seeking they found the certainty, and the time of his coming; they sought out till they found, and then they prophesied of that salvation and grace; *they searched what*, and *what manner of time*, and the Spirit did manifestly foretell it them.

They sought to know *what manner of time* it should come to pass, *viz.*, in a time of great distress, and bad estate of the people, as all the prophets testify: and particularly that place, Gen. xlix. 10, gives an express character of the time; though there be some diversity of exposition of the particular words, yet the main sense is agreed on by all sound interpreters, and the Chaldee paraphrase hath it expressly, that Shiloh is the Messiah.

And of his sufferings and after-glories they prophesied very clearly, as Psal. xxii., Isa. liii., &c. And our Savior himself makes use of their testimony in both these points, Luke xxiv, 25–27.

3*dly*. There is the benefit of their search and finding, in the *extent* of it, verse 12, to the believers in the apostle's times, and to the succeeding Christian church, and so to us in these days; but in some peculiar sense the prophets ministered to the people of those times wherein Christ did suffer and enter into glory, inasmuch as they were the first who enjoyed the accomplishment of those prophecies, they being fulfilled in their own days.

The prophets knew well that the things they prophesied were not to be fulfilled in their own times, and therefore in their prophesying concerning them, though both themselves and the people of God who were contemporary with them, did reap the comfort of that doctrine, and were by faith partakers of the same salvation; and so it was to

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themselves as well as of us; yet in regard of the accomplishment, they knew it was not to themselves, it was not to be brought to pass in their days; and, therefore, speaking of the glory of Christ's kingdom, they often foretell it for *the latter days*, as their phrase is. And as we have the things they prophesied of, so we have this peculiar benefit of their prophecies, that their suiting so perfectly with the event and performance, serves much to confirm our Christian faith.

There is a foolish and miserable way of verifying this expression,—men ministering the doctrine of salvation to others and *not to themselves:* carrying it in all their heads and tongues, and none of it in their hearts; not hearing it even while they preach it; extending the bread of life to others, and eating none of it themselves. And this, the apostle says, that he was most careful to avoid, and therefore dealt severely with his body, that it might not in this way endanger his soul. *I beat down my body*, says he, *and keep it in subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.* 1 Cor. ix. 27. It is not in this sense that the prophets ministered to others, and not to themselves. No, they had joy and comfort in the very hopes of the Redeemer to come, and in the belief of the things which any others had spoken, and which themselves spake concerning him. And thus the true preachers of the gospel, though their ministerial gifts are for the use of others, yet that salvation which they preach, they lay hold on and partake of themselves; as your boxes, wherein perfumes are kept for garments and other uses, are themselves perfumed by keeping them.

We see how the prophets ministered it as the never-failing consolation of the church in those days, in all their distresses. It is wonderful when they are foretelling either the sorrows and afflictions, or the temporal restoration and deliverances of that people of the Jews, what sudden outleaps they will make, to speak of the kingdom of Jesus Christ and the days of the gospel, insomuch that he who considers not the spirit they were moved by, would think it were incoherence and impertinency; but they knew well what they meant, that *those news* were never unseasonable, nor beside the purpose; that the sweetness of those thoughts, *viz.*, the consideration of the Messiah, was able (to such as believed) to allay the bitterest distresses, and that the great deliverance he was to work, was the top and sum of all deliverances. Thus their prophecies of him were present comfort to themselves and other believers then: and further, were to serve for a clear evidence of the divine truth of those mysteries in the days of the gospel, in and after their fulfilment.

This sweet stream of their doctrine did, as the rivers, make its own banks fertile and pleasant as it ran by, and flowed still forward to after-ages, and by the confluence of more such prophecies, grew greater as it went, till it fell in with the main current of the gospel in the New Testament, both acted and preached by the Great Prophet himself whom they foretold as *to come*, and recorded by his apostles and evangelists, and thus united into one river, clear as crystal. This doctrine of salvation in the scriptures hath still refreshed the city of God, his church under the gospel, and still shall do so, till it empty itself into the ocean of eternity.

The first discovery we have of this stream nearest its source, the eternal purpose of divine mercy, is in that promise which the Lord himself preached in few words to our first parents, who had newly made themselves and their race miserable: *The seed of the woman shall break the head of the serpent.* Gen. iii. 15.

The agreement of the predictions of the prophets with the things themselves, and the preaching of the apostles following (the other kind of men employed in this salvation), make up one organ, or great instrument, tuned by the same hand, and sounding by the same breath of the Spirit of God; and that is expressed here as the common authority of the doctrine in both, and the cause of their harmony and agreement in it.

All these extraordinary *gifts of the Holy Ghost*, the calling *of prophets and apostles and evangelists*, and the ordinary ministry of the Gospel by *pastors and teachers*, tend to that great design which God hath in *building his church*, in making up that great assembly of all the elect, to enjoy and praise him for all eternity, Eph. iv. 11. For this end he sent his Son, out of his bosom, and for this end he sends forth his messengers to divulge that salvation which his son hath wrought, and sends down his spirit upon them, that they may be fitted for so high a service. Those cherubim wonder how guilty man escapes their flaming swords, and re-enters paradise. The angels see that their companions who fell are not restored, but behold their room filled up with the spirits of just men, and they envy it not: *Which mystery the angels desire to look into;* and this is added in the close of these words for the extolling of it.

The angels look upon what they have seen already fulfilled, with delight and admiration, and what remains, namely, the full accomplishment of this great work in the end of time, they look upon with desire to see it finished; it is not a slight glance they take of it, but they fix their eyes and look steadfastly on it, *viz.*, that mystery of godliness, *God manifested in the flesh;* and it is added, *seen of angels*, 1 Tim. iii. 16.

*The Word made flesh*, draws the eyes of those glorious spirits, and possesses them with wonder to see the Almighty Godhead joined with the weakness of a man, yea, of an infant. He that stretched forth the heavens bound up in swaddling clothes! and to

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surpass all the wonders of his life, this is beyond all admiration, that the Lord of Life was subject to death, and that his love to rebellious mankind moved him both to take on and lay down that life.

It is no wonder the angels admire these things, and delight to look upon them; but it is strange that we do not so. They view them steadfastly, and we neglect them: either we consider them not at all, or give them but a transient look, half an eye. That which was the great business of the prophets and apostles, both for their own times, and to convey them to us, we regard not; and turn our eyes to foolish wandering thoughts, which angels are ashamed at. They are not so concerned in this great mystery as we are; they are but mere beholders, in comparison of us, yea, they seem rather to be losers some way, in that our nature, in itself inferior to theirs, is in Jesus Christ exalted above theirs, Heb. ii. 16. We bow down to the earth, and study, and grovel in it, rake into the very bowels of it, and content ourselves with the outside of *the unsearchable riches of Christ*, and look not within it; but they, having no will nor desire but for the glory of God, being pure flames of fire burning only in love to him, are no less delighted than amazed with the bottomless wonders of his wisdom and goodness shining in the work of our redemption.

It is our shame and folly, that we lose ourselves and our thoughts in poor childish things, and trifle away our days we know not how, and let these rich mysteries lie unregarded. They look up upon the Deity in itself with continual admiration; but then they look down to this mystery as another wonder. We give them an ear in public, and in a cold formal way stop conscience's mouth with some religious performances in private, and no more; but to have deep and frequent thoughts and to be ravished in the meditation of our Lord Jesus, once on the cross, and now in glory,—how few of us are acquainted with this!

We see here excellent company, and examples not only of the best of men that have been—we have them for fellow-servants and fellow-students—but, if that can persuade us, we may all study the same lesson with the very angels, and have the same thoughts with them. This the soul doth, which often entertains itself with the delightful admiration of Jesus Christ and the redemption he hath wrought for us.

VER. 13. Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you, at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The great error of man's mind, and the cause of all his errors of life, is the diverting of the soul from God, and turning downward to inferior confidences and comforts; and this mischoice is the very root of all our miseries: therefore the main end of the holy word of God, is to untie the hearts of men from the world, and reduce them to God as then only rest and solid comfort; and this is here the apostle's mark at which all the preceding discourse aims; it all meets and terminates in this exhortation, *Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind.*

In the words are these *three* things, 1*st*, The great stay and comfort of the soul, which the apostle repeats, and represents to his afflicted brethren. 2*dly*, His exciting them to the right apprehension and confident expectation of it. 3*dly*, The inference of that exhortation.

1. The great matter of their comfort is, *The grace which is to be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* Some for *grace* read *joy*, having as it seems, for χάριν read χαρὰν: the words are not more near one to another, that the things they signify, *grace* and *joy*; but it is most commonly thus read.

The estate of grace and that of glory, are not only so inseparably connected, but so like one to the other; yea, so essentially the same, that the same expressions in Scripture do often fit both of them; and so fit them, that it is doubtful for which of the two to understand them: but the hazard is not great, seeing they are so near, and so one, grace being glory begun, and glory grace completed, and both are often called *the kingdom of God*. So the *grace* here said to be *brought to them*, is either the *doctrine of grace* in the gospel wherein Jesus Christ is revealed, and that grace in him (for the whole tenor of the covenant of grace, every clause of it, holds in him; his precious name runs through it all); or, it is the *grace of salvation* which is to be fully perfected at the last and clearest revelation of Jesus Christ. And for this rather I take it here, inasmuch as the apostle's nearest foregoing words were concerning it, and it is set up here as the object of hope, which, though often put for faith, yet, in its proper notion, looks out to that which is to come.

This is the last act of grace, and yet still it is called by its own name, and not turned into the name of merit, notwithstanding all the obedience and all the sufferings of the saints that have gone before it; yea, *even the salvation to be revealed* to them, is called grace. But it is needless to insist on this, for certainly none who partake of grace, will be of another mind, or ever admit the mixture of the least notion of self-deserving.

Though much dispute hath been bestowed on this, and questions have been multiplying in the disputant's hands (as is usual in controversies), one growing out of another, yet truly I think the debate in this matter to be but waste; it is not only against the voice of the Scriptures, and of grace itself in the soul, but, even against sound reason, to imagine any meriting, properly taken, in any mere creature at his Creator's hand, who hath given him his being; of which gift all his

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services and obedience fall short, so that he can never come to be upon even disengaged terms, much less to oblige anew, and deserve somewhat further. Besides, that same grace by which any one serves and obeys God, is likewise his own gift, as it is said, 1 Chron. xxix. 14, *All things come of thee, and of thine own have I given thee.* Both the ability and the will of giving to him, are from him; so that in these respects, not angels, nor man in innocency, could properly merit at the hands of God, much less man lost, redeemed again, and so coming under the new obligation of infinite mercy. And this is so evident a truth, that the most learned and most ingenious jesuits and schoolmen have, in divers passages of their writings, acknowledged it, that there can not be any compensation, and much less merit from the creature to God, but only in relation to his own free purpose, and the tenure of his word and covenant, which is inviolable, because he is unchangeable, and truth itself.

His first grace he gives freely, and no less freely the increases of it, and with the same gracious hand sets the crown of glory upon all the grace that he hath given before. It is but the following forth of his own work, and fulfilling his own thoughts of free love, which love hath no cause but in himself, and finds none worthy, but gives them all the worthiness they have, and accepts of their love, not as worthy in itself, to be accepted, but because he himself hath wrought it in them. Not only the first tastes, but the full draught of the waters of life is freely given, Rev. xxii. 17; nothing is brought with them but *thirst.*

*That is to be brought.*] Not *that is brought,* or, *that shall be brought,* but if we will render it strictly, it is, *that is a bringing to you.* That blessedness, that consummation of grace the saints are hastening forward to, walking on in their way wheresoever it lies indifferently, *through honor and dishonor, through evil report and good report,* 2 Cor. vi. 8. And as they are hastening to it, it is hastening to them in the course of time; every day brings it nearer to them than before; and notwithstanding all difficulties and dangers in the way, they who have their eye and hopes upon it, shall arrive at it, and it shall be brought safe to their hand; all the malice of men and devils shall not be able to cut them short of this grace that is a bringing to them against the day of the *revelation of Jesus Christ.*

*At the revelation of Jesus Christ.*] This is repeated from the 7th verse. And it is termed *a day of revelation, a revelation of the just judgment of God,* Rom. ii. 5. And thus it would be to all, were it not that it is withal the *revelation of Jesus Christ;* therefore is it a day of grace, all light and blessedness to them who are in him, because they shall appear in him, and if he be glorious, they shall not be inglorious and ashamed. Indeed were our secret sins then to be, set before our own eyes, in their most affrighted visage, and to be set open to the view of angels and men, and to the eye of divine justice, and we left alone so revealed, who is there that could gather any comfort, and would not rather have their thoughts filled with horror at the remembrance and expectation of that day? And thus indeed all unbelieving and ungodly men may look upon it, and find it terrible; but to those who are shadowed under the robe of righteous Jesus, yea, who are made one with him, and shall partake of his glory in his appearing, it is the sweetest, the most comfortable thought that their souls can be entertained and possessed withal, to remember this glorious revelation of their Redeemer.

It is their great grief here, not that themselves are hated and vilified, but that their Lord Jesus is so little known, and therefore so much despised in the world. He is veiled and hid from the world. Many nations acknowledge him not at all; and many of those that do in word confess, yet in deed deny him. Many that have a form of godliness, do not only want, but mock and scoff at the power of it; and to such Christ is not known, his excellences are hid from their eyes. Now this glory of their Lord being precious to them that love him, they rejoice much in the consideration of this, that there is a day at hand wherein he shall appear in his brightness and full of glory to all nations, and all shall be forced to acknowledge him; it shall be without doubt and unquestioned to all, that he is *the Messiah, the Redeemer, the Judge of the World.*

And as it is the day of his revelation, it is also the revelation of all the adopted sons of God in him. See Rom. viii. 9. They are now accounted the refuse of the world, exposed to all kinds of contempt; but then the beams of Christ's glory shall beautify them, and they shall be known for his. See 1 John iii. 2; Col. iii. 4.

Next, there is, II. The exhortation, by which the apostle excites them to the right apprehension and confident expectation of this grace—*hope to the end.* The difference of these two graces, *faith* and *hope,* is so small, that the one is often taken for the other in Scripture; it is but a different aspect of the same confidence, *faith* apprehending the infallible truth of those divine promises of which *hope* doth assuredly expect the accomplishment, and that is their truth; so that this immediately results from the other. This is the anchor fixed within the veil, which keeps the soul firm against all the tossings on these swelling seas, and the winds and tempests that arise upon them. The firmest thing in this inferior world is a believing soul.

Faith establishes the heart on Jesus Christ, and hope lifts it up, being on that rock, over the head of all intervenient dangers, crosses,

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and temptations, and sees the glory and happiness that follow after them.

*To the end.*] Or perfectly: and therefore the Christian seeks most earnestly, and yet waits most patiently. Psal. cxxx. 6. Indeed, this hope is perfect in continuance, it is a *hope unto the end*, because it is perfect in its nature, although imperfect in degree. Sometimes doubtings are intermixed with it in the souls of Christians, yet *this is their infirmity*, as the psalmist speaks (Psal. lxxvii. 10), not the infirmity and insufficiency of the object of their hope. Worldly hopes are in their own nature imperfect; they do imply, in their very being, doubtfulness and wavering, because the things whereon they are built are inconstant and uncertain, and full of deceit and disappointments. How can that hope be immoveable which is built upon moving sands or quagmire? That which is itself unfixed can not give stability to any other thing resting upon it; but because the truth and goodness of the immutable God are the foundation of spiritual hope, therefore it is assured, and *like Mount Zion that can not be removed* (Psal. cxxv. 1): and this is its perfection.

Now the apostle exhorts his brethren to endeavor to have their hearts possessed with as high a measure and degree of this hope as may be; seeing in itself it is so perfect and firm, so assured a hope, he would have them aspire to all the assurance and perfection of it they can attain.

This exercise of hope, as I conceive, is not only to have the habit of it strong in the soul, but to act it often, to be often turning that way, to view that approaching day of liberty: *Lift up your heads, for the day of your redemption draweth nigh.* Luke xxi. 28. Where this hope is often acted, it will grow strong, as all habits do; and where it is strong it will work much, and delight to act often, and will control both the doubtings and the other many impertinent thoughts of the mind, and force them to yield the place to it. Certainly they who long much for that coming of Christ, will often look up to it. We are usually hoping after other things, which do but offer themselves to draw us after them, and to scorn us. What are the breasts of most of us, but so many nests of foolish hopes and fears intermixed, which entertain us day and night, and steal away our precious hours from us, that might be laid out so gainfully upon the wise and sweet thoughts of eternity, and upon the blessed and assured hope of the coming of our beloved Savior!

The other words of exhortation here used, are subservient to this end, and this hope may be the more perfect and firm; a similar exhortation is much after the same manner joined by our Savior (Luke xii. 35) with the expectance and waiting for his coming; and in this posture the Israelites, eating the passover, were expecting their deliverance; so we our full and final freedom.

If you would have much of this, call off your affections from other things, that they may be capable of much of it. The same eye can not both look up to heaven and down to earth at the same time. The more your affections are trussed up and disentangled from the world, the more expedite and active will they be in this hope: the more sober they are, the less will they fill themselves with the coarse delights of earth, the more room will there be in them, and the more they shall be filled with this hope. It is great folly in our spiritual warfare to charge ourselves superfluously. The fulness of one thing hinders the receiving and admittance of any other, especially of things so opposite as these fulnesses are. *Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be ye filled with the Holy Ghost*, saith the apostle, Ephes. v. 18. *That* is a brutish fulness, which makes a man no man; *this* divine fulness makes him more than a man; it were happy to be so filled with this, as that it might be called a kind of drunkenness, as it was with the apostles, Acts ii.

*Be sober.*] Or *watch.* The same word signifies both, and with good reason; for you know the unsober can not watch. Now though one main part of sobriety, and that which more properly and particularly bears this name, viz., *temperance* in meat and drink, is here intended; and though against the opposite to this, not only the purity and spirituality of religion, but even moral virtue inveighs as its special enemy, yea, nature itself; and they that only naturally consider the body and its interest of life and health, find reason enough to cry down this base intemperance, which is so hateful by its own deformity, and withal carries its punishment along with it; although (I say) this sobriety is indeed most necessary for the preservation of grace and of the spiritual temper of the soul, and is here intended, yet, I conceive, it is not all that is here meant; the word is more general, comprehending the moderate and sober use of all things worldly. As the apostle says, *Gird up the loins of your mind*, so it is to be understood, let your *minds* be sober, all your affections inwardly attempered to your spiritual condition, not glutting yourselves with fleshy and perishing delights of any kind; for the more you take in of these, the less you shall have of spiritual comfort and of this perfect hope. They that pour out themselves upon present delights, look not like strangers here, and hopeful expectants of another life and better pleasures.

And certainly the captain of our salvation will not own them for his followers, who lie down to drink of these waters, but only such as in passing take of them with their hand. As excessive eating or drinking both makes the body sickly and lazy, fit for nothing but sleep, and besots the mind, as it cloys up with filthy crudities the ways through which the spirit should pass, bemiring them, and

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making them more heavily, as a coach in a deep way; thus doth all immoderate use of the world, and its delights, wrong the soul in its spiritual condition, makes it sickly and feeble, full of spiriual distempers and inactivity, benumbs the graces of the Spirit, and fills the soul with sleepy vapors, makes it grow secure and heavy in spiritual exercises, and obstructs the way and motion of the Spirit of God in the soul. Therefore, if you would be spiritual, healthful, and vigorous, and enjoy much of the consolations of heaven, be sparing and sober in those of the earth, and what you abate of the one, shall be certainly made up in the other. Health, with a good constitution of body, is more a constant, permanent pleasure, than that of excess and a momentary pleasing of the palate: thus the comfort of this hope is a more refined and more abiding contentment than any that is to be found in the passing enjoyments of this world; and it is a foolish bargain to exchange a drachm of the one for many pounds of the other. Consider how pressingly the Apostle St. Paul reasons, 1 Cor. ix. 25, *And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.* And take withal our Savior's exhortation: *Be sober and watch, for ye know not at what hour your Lord will come.* Matt. xxv. 13.

*The double-minded man* (says St. James) *is unstable in all his ways*, Jam. i. 8. Although the word usually signifies deceitfulness and dissimulation of mind—answering to the Hebrew phrase *a heart and a heart*—yet here I conceive it hath another sense, agreeable to the apostle's present discourse and scope; it implies doubtfulness and unsettled wavering of mind.

It is impossible that the course of life can be any other than uneven and incomposed, if the spring of it, *the heart*, whence *are the issues of life*, be so. A man that is not agreed within, not of one mind with himself, although there were nothing to trouble or alter him from without, that inward commotion is a sufficient principle and cause of inconstancy. How much more then must he waver, when he is assaulted, and beat upon by outward oppositions! He is *like the waves of the sea*, of himself ever fluctuating to and fro, according to the natural instability of that element, and at the same time exposed to the tossing of all the waves that arise.

It is, therefore, in religion, a main thing, to have the heart established and fixed in the belief and hope of the great things we look for: this will beget strength of resolution, and constancy in action, and in suffering too. And this is here our apostle's great intent, to ballast the souls of his brethren with this firm belief, that they might sail even and steady in those seas of trouble. Wherefore (says he), if these things we have spoken be thus, if there is indeed truth in them, and you believe it to be so, what remains then, but to resolve for it upon any terms, to fit out for the journey, whatsoever be the difficulties, and amid them all to keep up the soul by that certain hope that will not disappoint us.

What he hath said before, is, as it were, showing them some fruits, some clusters of grapes, of that promised land; and this exhortation is answerable to Caleb's words, Numb. xiii. 30: *Seeing it so good a land, let us go up and possess it.* Though there be fleshly objects, *sons of Anak*, giants of temptations, and afflictions, and sins to be overcome, ere it be ours, yet it is well worth all our labor, and our God hath ascertained us of the victory, and given us, by his own word, undoubted hope of possessing it.

That which he principally exhorts unto in this verse is the right placing and firm continuing of our hope. When we consider how much of our life is taken up this way, in hoping for things we have not, and that even they who have most of what others are desiring and pursuing, are still hoping for somewhat further, that when men have attained one thing, though it be something they promised themselves to rest contented withal, yet presently upon obtaining it, hope begins to find out some new matter for itself; I say considering the incessant working of this passion throughout our life, it is of very much concernment for us to give it a right object, and not still to be living in vanity and uncertainty. Here is, then, that for our hope to apply itself to, after which it needs not change, nor can change without the greatest loss. *Hope for the grace that is coming at the revelation of Jesus Christ;* bestow all your hope on this and recall it not. *Hope perfectly, and to the end.*

The other part of the exhortation relates to this as the main end, and in the original runs in this form: *Wherefore, girding up the loins of your mind, being sober, hope.* And to the end that hope may be the more perfect and endure to the end, and be more like itself, *i. e.*, heavenly, your minds must be freed from the earth, that they may set for heaven. And this is expressed in two several words, but both meaning much the same thing: that temper of *sobriety*, and that posture of being *girt*, are no other than the some removal of earthly-mindedness and incumbering cares and desires of earthly things.

*Gird up the loins.*] The custom of those countries was, that wearing long garments, they trussed them up for work or a journey. Chastity is indeed a Christian grace, and a great part of the soul's freedom and spiritualness, and fits it much for divine things, yet I think it is not so particularly and entirely intended in this expression, as St. Jerome and others take it; for though the girding of the loins seemed to them to favor that sense, it is only an allusion to the manner of girding up which was then used; and besides, the apostle here makes it clear that he meant somewhat else; for he says, *The loins of your minds.* Gather up your affections that

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they hang not down to hinder you in your race, and so, in your hopes of obtaining; and do not only gather them up, but tie them up, that they fall not down again, or if they do, be sure to gird them straiter than before. Thus be still as men prepared for a journey, tending to another place. This is not our home, nor the place of our rest: therefore our loins must be still girt up, our affections kept from training and dragging down upon the earth.

Men who are altogether earthly and profane, are so far from girding up the loins of their mind, that they set them wholly downward. The very highest part of their soul is glued to the earth, and they are daily partakers of the serpent's curse, they go on their belly and eat the dust: *they mind earthly things.* Phil. iii. 19. Now this disposition is inconsistent with grace: but they that are in some measure truly godly, though they grovel not so, yet may be somewhat guilty of suffering their affections to fall too low, that is, to be too much conversant with vanity, and further engaged than is meet, to some things that are worldly; and by this means they may abate of their heavenly hopes, and render them less perfect, less clear and sensible to their souls.

And because they are most subject to take this liberty in the fair and calm weather of prosperity, God doth often wisely and mercifully cause rough blasts of affliction to arise upon them, to make them gather their loose garments nearer to them, and gird them closer.

Let us then remember our way, and where we are, and keep our garments girt up, for we walk amid thorns and briers which, if we let them down, will entangle and stop us, and possibly tear our garments. We walk through a world where there is much mire of sinful pollutions, and therefore it can not but defile them; and the crowd we are among will be ready to tread on them, yea, our own feet may be entangled in them, and so make us stumble, and possibly fall. Our only safest way is to gird up our affections wholly.

This perfect hope is enforced by the whole strain of it; for well may we fix our hope on that happiness to which we are appointed in the eternal election of God, ver. 2, and born to it by our new birth, ver. 3, 4, and preserved to it by his almighty power, ver. 5, and can not be cut short of it by all the afflictions and oppositions in the way; no, nor so much as deprived by them of our present joy and comfort in the assurance of it, ver. 6, 7, 8, 9. And then being taught the greatness and excellency of that blessed salvation, by the doctrine of the prophets and apostles, and the admiration of angels, all these conspire to confirm our hope, to make it perfect and persevering to the end.

And we may also learn by the foregoing doctrine, that this is the place of our trial and conflict, but the place of our rest is above. We must here have *our loins girt*, but when come there, we may wear our long white robes at their full length without disturbance, for there is nothing there but peace, and without danger of defilement, for *no unclean thing is there*, yea the streets of that new Jerusalem are paved with gold. To him, then, who hath prepared that city for us, let us ever give praise.

VER. 14. As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance.

VER. 15. But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.

VER. 16. Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.

*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet*, says David, *and a light unto my paths*, Psal. cxix. 105: not only comfortable, as light is to the eyes, but withal directive, as a lamp to his feet. Thus here the apostle doth not only furnish consolation against distress, but exhorts and directs his brethren in the way of holiness, without which, the apprehension and feeling of those comforts can not subsist.

This is no other than a clearer and fuller expression, and further pressing of that sobriety and spiritualness of mind and life, which he jointly exhorted unto, with that duty of perfect hope, ver. 13, as inseparably connected with it. If you would enjoy this hope, be not conformed to the lusts of your former ignorance, but *be holy.*

There is no doctrine in the world either so pleasant or so pure as that of Christianity: it is matchless, both in sweetness and holiness. The faith and hope of a Christian have in them an abiding precious balm of comfort; but this is never to be so lavished away, as to be poured into the puddle of an impure conscience: no, that were to lose it unworthily. *As many as have this hope purify themselves, even as he is pure.* 1 John iii. 3. Here they are commanded to be *holy as he is holy.* Faith first purifies the heart (Acts xv. 9), empties it of the love of sin, and then fills it with the consolation of Christ and the hope of glory.

It is a foolish misgrounded fear, and such as argues inexperience of the nature and workings of divine grace, to imagine that the assured hope of salvation will beget unholiness and presumptuous boldness in sin, and that therefore the doctrine of that assurance is a doctrine of licentiousness. Our apostle, we see, is not so sharp-sighted as these men think themselves; he apprehends no such matter, but indeed supposes the contrary as unquestionable; he takes not assured hope and holiness as enemies, but joins them as nearest friends: *hope perfectly*, and *be holy.*

They are mutually strengthened and increased each by the other. The more assurance of salvation, the more holiness, the more delight in it, and study of it as the only way to that end. And as labor is most pleasant when we are made surest it shall not be lost, nothing doth make the soul so nimble and active in obedience as this *oil of gladness*, this assured hope of glory. Again, the more holiness there is in the soul, the clearer always is this assurance; as we see the face of the

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heavens best, when there are fewest clouds. The greatest affliction doth not damp this hope so much as the smallest sin; yea, it may be the more lively and sensible to the soul by affliction; but by sin it always suffers loss, as the experience of all Christians does certainly teach them.

The apostle exhorts to obedience, and enforceth it by a most persuasive reason. His exhortation is, 1. Negative, *Not fashioning yourselves.* 2. Positive, *Be ye holy.*

1. For the negative part of the exhortation. That from which he would remove and separate them is *lusts:* this is in Scripture the usual name of all the irregular and sinful desires of the heart, both the polluted habits of them and their corrupt streams, both as they exist within and as they outwardly vent themselves in the lives of men. The apostle St. John (1 John ii. 17) calls it the *Lust of the world*, and (verse 15) *Love of the world;* and then (verse 16) branches it into those three, which are, indeed, the base anti-trinity that the world worships, *The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.*

The soul of man unconverted is no other than a den of impure lusts, wherein dwell pride and uncleanness, avarice, malice, &c., just as Babylon is described, Rev. xviii. 2, or as Isa. xiii. 21. Were a man's eyes opened, he would as much abhor to remain with himself in that condition as to dwell in a house full of snakes and serpents, as St. Austin says. And the first part of conversion is at once to rid the soul of these noisome inhabitants; for there is no one at all found naturally vacant and free from them. Thus the apostle here expresses of the believers to whom he wrote, that these lusts were theirs before, *in their ignorance.*

There is a truth implied in it, *viz.*, that all sin arises from some kind of ignorance, or, at least, from present inadvertence and inconsideration, turning away the mind from the light; which therefore, for the time, is as if it were not, and is all one with ignorance in the effect, and therefore the works of sin are all called *works of darkness;* for were the true visage of sin seen by a full light, undressed and unpainted, it were impossible, while it so appeared, that any one soul could be in love with it; it would rather fly it, as hideous and abominable. But because the soul unrenewed is all darkness, therefore it is all lust and love of sin; there is no order in it, because no light. As at the first in the world, confusion and darkness went together, and *darkness was upon the face of the deep*, it is so in the soul: the more ignorance, the more abundance of lusts.

That light which frees the soul, and rescues it from the very kingdom of darkness, must be somewhat beyond that which nature can attain to. All the light of philosophy, natural and moral, is not sufficient, yea, the very knowledge of the law, severed from Christ, serves not so to enlighten and renew the soul, as to free it from the darkness or ignorance here spoken of; for our apostle writes to Jews who knew the law, and were instructed in it before their conversion; yet he calls those times, wherein Christ was unknown to them, the *times of their ignorance.* Though the stars shine never so bright, and the moon with them in its full, yet they do not altogether make it day; still it is night till the sun appear. Therefore the Hebrew doctors, upon that word of Solomon's, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity*, say, *Vana etiam lex, donec venerit Messias:* Vain even the law until Messiah come. Therefore of him Zachariah says, *The day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace*, Luke i. 78, 79.

A natural man may attain to very much acquired knowledge of the doctrine of Christ, and may discourse excellently of it, and yet still his soul be in the *chains of darkness*, fast locked up under the ignorance here mentioned, and so he may be still of a *carnal mind*, in subjection to these lusts of ignorance.

The saving light of faith is a beam of the *Sun of Righteousness* himself, that he sends into the soul, by which he makes it discern his incomparable beauties, and by that sight alienates it from all those lusts and desires, which do then appear to be what indeed they are, vileness and filthiness itself, making the soul wonder at itself, how it could love such base trash so long, and fully resolve now on the choice of Jesus Christ, *the chief among ten thousands*, Cant. v. 10, yea, *the fairest of the children of men*, Psal. xlv. 2, for that he is withal the only-begotten Son of God, *the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*, Heb. i. 3.

The soul once acquainted with him, can, with disdain, turn off all the base solicitations and importunities of sin, and command them away that formerly had command over it, though they plead former familiarities and the interest they once had in the heart of the Christian before it was enlightened and renewed. He can well tell them, after his sight of Christ, that it is true, while he knew no better pleasures than they were, he thought them lovely and pleasing; but that one glance of the face of Jesus Christ hath turned them all into extreme blackness and deformity, that so soon as ever Christ appeared to him, they straightway lost all their credit and esteem in his heart, and have lost it for ever; they need never look to recover it any more.

And it is by this that the apostle enforceth this dehortation. It is true, that the lusts and vanities that are in request in the world were so with you, but it was when you were blind, they were the lusts of your ignorance: but now you know how ill they will suit with the light of that gospel which you profess, and that inward light of faith which is in the souls of such as be really believers.



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Therefore, seeing you have renounced them, keep them still at that distance; not only never admit them more to lodge within you: that surely you can not do; but do not so much as for custom sake, and in compliance with the world about you, outwardly conform yourselves to any of them, or make semblance to partake of them: as St. Paul says, *Have no more fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*, Eph. v. 11; reprove them by your carriage, and let the light of your holy lives discover their foulness.

II. We have the positive part of the apostle's exhortation, *Be ye holy*. This includes the former, the renouncing of the lusts and pollutions of the world, both in heart and life; and adds to it, further, the filling of their room, being cast out, with the beautifying graces of the Spirit of God, and the acting of those graces in their whole conversation, both in private and abroad, in conversing with themselves, and conversing with others, whether good or bad, in a constant even course, still like themselves, and like him who hath called them: for it is a most unseemly and unpleasant thing to see a man's life full of ups and downs, one step like a Christian and another like a worldling; it can not choose but both pain himself and mar the edification of others.

*But as He which hath called you is holy.*] Consider whose you are, and you can not deny that it becomes you to be holy. Consider your near relation to the holy God; this is expressed two ways, namely, *As children*, and *As he which hath called you*; which is all one as if he had said, hath begotten you again. The very outward vocation of those who profess Christ, presseth holiness upon them, but the inward vocation far more. You were running to destruction in the way of sin, and there was a voice which, together with the gospel preached to your ear, spake into your heart, and called you back from that path of death to the way of holiness, which is the only way of life. He hath severed you from the mass of the profane world, and picked you out to be jewels for himself. He hath set you apart for this end, that you may be *holy to him* (as the Hebrew word which signifies *holiness*, imports *setting apart*, or fitting for a peculiar use); be not then untrue to his design. *He hath not called you unto uncleanness, but unto holiness*, 1 Thess. iv. 7: therefore *be ye holy*. It is sacrilege for you to dispose of yourselves after the impure manner of the world, and to apply yourselves to any profane use, whom God hath consecrated to himself.

*As children.*] This is, no doubt, relative to that which he spoke, verse 3, by way of thanksgiving: and that *wherefore* in the 13th verse, draws it down hither by way of exhortation. Seeing you are, by a spiritual and new birth, the children of so great and good a father, who commands you to holiness, be obedient children, in being holy; and seeing he himself is most holy, be like him as his children, *Be ye holy, as he is holy.*

*As obedient children.*] Opposed o that expression, Eph. ii. 2, *sons of disobedience*, or *unbelief*, as the word may be rendered, and that is always the spring of disobedience: sons of mispersuasibleness, who will not be drawn and persuaded by the tenderest mercies of God. Now, though this Hebrew manner of speech, *sons of obedience* or *disobedience*, signifies no more than obedient or disobedient persons, yet it doth signify them most emphatically, and means a high degree of obedience or disobedience; these *sons of disobedience*, verse 2, are likewise *sons of wrath*, verse 3.

Of all children the children of God are the most obliged to obedience, for he is both the wisest and the most loving of fathers. And the sum of all his commands is that which is their glory and happiness, that they endeavor to be like him, to resemble their heavenly Father. *Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*, says our Savior, Matt. v. 48. And here the apostle is citing out of the law *Be ye holy, for I am holy*, Levit. xi. 44. Law and gospel agree in this. Again: children who resemble their fathers, as they grow up in years, they grow the more like to them thus the children of God do increase in their resemblance, and are daily more and more renewed after his image. There is in them an innate likeness, by reason of his image impressed on them in their first renovation, and his spirit dwelling within them; and there is a continual increase of it, arising from their pious imitation and study of conformity which is here exhorted to.

The imitation of vicious men and the corrupt world is here forbidden. The imitation of men's indifferent customs is base and servile; the imitation of the virtues of good men is commendable; but the imitation of this highest pattern, this primitive goodness, the most holy God, is the top of excellency. It is well said, *Summa religionis est imitari quem colis:* The essence of religion consists in the imitation of him we worship. All of us offer him some kind of worship, but few seriously study and endeavor this blessed conformity.

There is unquestionably, among those who profess themselves the people of God, a select number who are indeed his children, and bear his image both in their hearts and in their lives; this impression of holiness is on their souls and their conversation; but with the most, a name and a form of godliness are all they have for religion. Alas! we speak of holiness, and we hear of it, and it may be we commend it, but we act it not; or, if we do, it is but an acting of it, in the sense in which the word is often taken for a personated acting, as on a stage in the sight of men; not as in the sight of our lovely God, lodging it in our hearts, and thence diffusing it

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into all our actions. A child is truly like his father, when not only his visage resembles him, but still more so his mind and inward disposition; thus are the true children of God like their heavenly Father in their words and in their actions, but most of all in heart.

It is no matter though the profane world (which so hates God that it can not endure his image) do mock and revile; it is thy honor to be, as David said, 2 Sam. vi. 22, thus *more vile*, in growing still more like unto him in holiness. What though the polite man count thy fashion a little odd and too precise; it is because he knows nothing above that model of goodness which he hath set himself, and therefore approves of nothing beyond it: he knows not God, and therefore doth not discern and esteem what is most like him. When courtiers come down into the country, the common homebred people possibly think their habit strange, but they care not for that, it is the fashion at court. What need then that the godly should be so tender-foreheaded, as to be put out of countenance because the world looks on holiness as a singularity? it is the only fashion in the highest court, yea, of the King of kings himself.

*For I am holy.*] As it will raise our endeavor high to look on the highest pattern, so it will lay our thoughts low concerning ourselves. Men compare themselves with men, and readily with the worst, and flatter themselves with that comparative betterness. This is not the way to see our spots, to look into the muddy streams of profane men's lives; but look into the clear fountain of the word, and there we may both discern and wash them. Consider the infinite holiness of God, and this will humble us to the dust. When Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord, and heard the seraphim cry, *Holy, holy, holy*, he cried out of his own and the people's unholiness, *Wo is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.* Chap. vi. 3, 4.

VER. 17. And if ye call on the father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.

THE temptations which meet a Christian in the world, to turn him aside from the straight way of obedience and holiness, are either such as present the hope of some apparent good, to draw him from that way, or the fear of some evil, to drive and affright him from it; and therefore the word of God is much in strengthening the Christian mind against these two; and it doth it especially, by possessing it both with hopes and fears of a higher nature, that do by far weigh down the other.

The most frequent assaults of temptation are upon these two passions of the mind: therefore they are chiefly to be fortified and defended by a hope and fear opposite to those that do assault us, and sufficiently strong to resist and repel them.

These two, therefore, our apostle here urges: 1. The *hope* of that glory which the gospel propounds, and so outbids all the proffers of the world, both in the greatness and the certainty of its promises. 2. The *fear* of God, the greatest and justest judge, alone worthy to be feared and reverenced; the highest anger and enmity of all the world being less than nothing, in comparison of his smallest displeasure. We have here,

I. This fear. II. The reason enforcing it. III. The term or continuance of it.

I. The fear itself, *In fear.* But how suits this with the high discourse that went before, of perfect assured hope, of faith, and love, and joy, yea, joy unspeakable and glorious, arising out of these? How are all those excellences fallen, as it were, into a dungeon, when fear is mentioned after them! Doth not the Apostle St. John say, that *True love casteth out fear?* 1 John iv. 18. And is it not more clearly opposite to perfect or assured hope, and to faith and joy?

If ye understand it aright, this is such a fear as doth not prejudice, but preserve those other graces, and the comfort and joy that arise from them; and they all agree so well with it, that they are naturally helps to each other.

It were superfluous to insist on the defining of this passion of fear, and the manifold distinctions of it, either with philosophers or divines. The fear here recommended is, out of question, a holy self-suspicion and fear of offending God, which may not only consist with assured hope of salvation, and with faith, and love, and spiritual joy, but is their inseparable companion; as all divine graces are linked together (as the heathens said of their three graces), and, as they dwell together, they grow or decrease together. The more a Christian believes, and loves, and rejoices in the love of God, the more unwilling surely he is to displease him, and if in danger of displeasing him, the more afraid of it; and, on the other side, this fear being the true principle of a wary and holy conversation, fleeing sin, and the occasions of sin, and temptations to it, and resisting them when they make an assault, is as a watch or guard that keeps out the enemies and disturbers of the soul, and so preserves its inward peace, keeps the assurance of faith and hope unmolested, and that joy which they cause, and the intercourse and societies of love between the soul and her beloved, uninterrupted; all which are most in danger when this fear abates and falls to slumbering; for then some notable sin or other is ready to break in and put all into disorder, and for a time make those graces, and the comfort of them to present feeling, as much to seek as if they were not there at all.

No wonder, then, that the apostles, having stirred up his Christian brethren, whatever

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be their estate in the world, to seek to be rich in those jewels of faith, and hope, and love, and spiritual joy, and then, considering that they travel among a world of thieves and robbers—no wonder, I say, that he adds this, advises them to give those their jewels in custody, under God, to this trusty and watchful grace of godly fear; and having earnestly exhorted them to holiness, he is very fitly particular in this fear, which makes up so great a part of that holiness, that it is often in scripture named for it all.

Solomon calls it the *beginning*, or the *top of wisdom*, Prov. xv. 33; the word signifies both, and it is both. The beginning of it is the beginning of wisdom, and the progress and increase of it is the increase of wisdom. That hardy rashness which many account valor is the companion of ignorance; and of all rashness, boldness to sin is the most witless and foolish. There is in this, as in all fear, an apprehension of an evil whereof we are in danger. The evil is sin, and the displeasure of God and punishment following upon sin. The godly man judgeth wisely, as the truth is, that sin is the greatest of evils, and the cause of all other evils; it is a transgression of the just law of God, and so a provocation of his just anger, and the cause of those punishments, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, which he inflicts. And then, considering how mighty he is to punish, considering both the power and the reach of his hand, that it is both most heavy and unavoidable; all these things may and should concur to the working of this fear.

There is, no doubt, a great difference between those two kinds of fear that are usually differenced by the names of *servile* and *filial* fear; but certainly the most genuine fear of the sons of God, who call him Father, doth not exclude the consideration of his justice and of the punishment of sin which his justice inflicts. We see here, it is used as the great motive of this fear, that he *judgeth every man according to his works*. And David in that psalm wherein he so much breathes forth those other sweet affections of love, and hope, and delight in God and in his word, yet expresseth this fear even of the justice of God: *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.* Ps. cxix. 120. The flesh is to be awed by divine judgments, though the higher and surer part of the soul is strongly and freely tied with the cords of love. Temporal corrections, indeed, they fear not so much in themselves, as that impression of wrath that may be upon them for their sins. Ps. vi. 1. That is the main matter of their fear, because their happiness is in his love, and the light of his countenance, that is their life. They regard not how the world looks upon them; they care not who frown, so he smile on them; because no other enemy nor evil in the world can deprive them of this but their own sin, therefore that is what they fear most.

As the evil is great, so the Christian hath great reason to fear in regard of his danger of it, considering the multitude, strength, and craft of his enemies, and his own weakness and unskilfulness to resist them. And his sad experience in being often foiled, teacheth him that it is thus; he can not be ignorant of it: he finds how often his own resolutions and purposes deceive him. Certainly a godly man is sometimes driven to wonder at his own frailty and inconstancy. What strange differences will be between him and himself: how high and how delightful at some times are his thoughts of God and the glory of the life to come; and yet, how easily at another time base temptations will bemire him, or, at the least, molest and vex him! And this keeps him in a continual fear, and that fear in continual vigilancy and circumspectness. When he looks up to God, and considers the truth of his promises, and the sufficiency of his grace and protection, and the almighty strength of his Redeemer, these things fill his soul with confidence and assurance; but when he turns his eye downward again upon himself, and finds so much remaining corruption within, and so many temptations, and dangers, and adversaries without, this forces him not only to fear, but to despair of himself; and it should do so, that his trust in God may be the purer and more entire. That confidence in God will not make him secure and presumptuous in himself, nor that fear of himself make him diffident of God. This fear is not opposite to faith, but highmindedness and presumption are. See Rom. xi. 20. To a natural man, it would seem an odd kind of reasoning that of the apostle, Phil. ii. 12, 13: *It is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure*: therefore (would he think), you may save labor, you may sit still, and not work, or, if you work, you may work fearlessly, being so sure of his help: but the apostle is of another mind; his inference is, Therefore, *work out your own salvation*, and work it *with fear and trembling*.

But he that hath assurance of salvation, why should he fear? If there is truth in his assurance, nothing can disappoint him, not sin itself. It is true; but it is no less true, that if he do not fear to sin, there is no truth in his assurance: it is not the assurance of faith, but the mispersuasion of a secure and profane mind. Suppose it so, that the sins of a godly man can not be such as to cut him short of that salvation whereof he is assured; yet they may be such as for a time will deprive him of that assurance, and not only remove the comfort he hath in that, but let in horrors and anguish of conscience in its stead. Though a believer is freed from hell (and we may overstrain this assurance, in our doctrine, beyond what the soberest and devoutest men in the world can ever find in themselves, though they will not trouble themselves to contest and dispute with them that say they have it), so that his soul can not come there

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yet some sins may bring as it were a hell into his soul for a time, and this is reason enough for any Christian in his right wits to be afraid of sin. No man would willingly hazard himself upon a fall that may break his leg, or some other bone; though he could be made sure that he should not break his neck, or that his life were not at all in danger, and that he should be perfectly cured, yet the pain and trouble of such a hurt would terrify him, and make him wary and fearful when he walks in danger. The broken bones that David complains of after his fall, may work fear and wariness in those that hear him, though they were ascertained of a like recovery.

This fear is not cowardice: it doth not debase, but elevates the mind; for it drowns all lower fears, and begets true fortitude and courage to encounter all dangers, for the sake of a good conscience and the obeying of God. *The righteous is bold as a lion.* Prov. xxviii. 1. He dares do anything but offend God; and to dare to do that is the greatest folly, and weakness, and baseness, in the world. From this fear have sprung all the generous resolutions and patient sufferings of the saints and martyrs of God; because they durst not sin against him, therefore they durst be imprisoned, and impoverished, and tortured, and die for him. Thus the prophet sets carnal and godly fear as opposite, and the one expelling the other, Isai. viii. 12, 13. And our Savior, Luke xii. 4, *Fear not them that kill the body; but fear Him which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you fear him.* Fear not, but fear; and therefore fear, that you may not fear. This fear is like the trembling that hath been observed in some of great courage before battles. Moses was bold and fearless in dealing with a proud and wicked king, but when God appeared, he said (as the apostle informs us), *I exceedingly fear and quake.* Heb. xii. 21.

II. The reason we have here to persuade to this fear is twofold. (1.) Their relation to God. (2.) Their relation to the world.

(1.) To God as their Father, and as their Judge. Because you do call him Father, and profess yourselves his children, *begotten again* by him (for this verse looks back to that expression), it becomes you, as obedient children, to stand in awe, and fear to offend him your Father, and a Father so full of goodness and tender love. But as he is the best Father, so consider that he is withal the greatest and justest Judge: *He judges every man according to his work.*

God always sees and discerns men, and all their works, and *judgeth*, that is, accounteth of them, as they are, and sometimes in this life declares this his judgment of them to their own consciences, and in some to the view of others, in visible punishments and rewards; but the most solemn judgment of all is reserved to that great day which he hath appointed, *wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by his Son Jesus.* Acts xvii. 32.

There is here the *sovereignty* of this Judge, the *universality* of his judgment, and the *equity* of it. All must answer at his great court; he is supreme judge of the world. He made it, and hath therefore unquestionable right to judge it. *He judgeth every man;* and it is a most righteous judgment, which hath these two in it: 1. An exact and perfect knowledge of all men's works; 2. Impartial judgment of them so known. This second is expressed negatively, by removing the crooked rule which man's judgment often follows; it is without consideration of those personal differences which men eye so much. And the first is according to the work itself. Job xxxiv. 19: *He accepteth not the person of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor;* and the reason is added there, *For they are all the work of his hands.* He made all the persons, and he makes all those differences himself as it pleaseth him; therefore he doth not admire them as we do, no, nor at all regard them. We find very great odds between stately palaces and poor cottages, between a prince's robes and a beggar's cloak; but to God they are all one; all these petty differences vanish in comparison of his own greatness. Men are great and small, compared with one another; but they altogether amount to just nothing in respect of him. We find high mountains and low valleys on this earth; but compared with the vast compass of the heavens, it is all but as a point, and hath no sensible greatness at all.

Nor regards he any other differences to bias his judgment, from the works of men, to their persons. You profess the true religion, and call him Father; but if you live devoid of his fear, and be disobedient children, he will not spare you because of that relation, but rather punish you the more severely. Because you pretended to be his children, and yet obeyed him not, therefore you shall find him your judge, and an impartial judge of your works. Remember, therefore, that your Father is this judge, and fear to offend him. But then, indeed, a believer may look back to the other comfort, who abuses it not to a sinful security. He resolves thus willingly: "I will not sin, because my Father is this just Judge; but for my frailties I will hope for mercy, because the Judge is my Father."

*Their works.*] This comprehends all actions and words, yea, thoughts; and each work entirely, taken outside and inside together; for he sees all alike, and judgeth according to all together. He looks on the wheels and paces within, as well as on the handle without, and therefore ought we to fear the least crookedness of our intentions in the best works; for if we entertain any such, and study not singleness of heart, this will cast all, though we pray and hear the word, and preach it, and live outwardly unblameably. And in that great judgment, all secret

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things shall be manifest; as they are always open to the eye of this Judge, so he shall then open them before men and angels: therefore let the remembrance and frequent consideration of this all-seeing Judge, and of that great judgment, waken our hearts, and beget in us this fear. 2 Cor. v. 10, 11. If you would have confidence in that day, and not fear it when it comes, fear it now, so as to avoid sin; for they that now tremble at it, shall then, when it comes, lift up their faces with joy; and they that will not fear it now, shall then be overwhelmed with fears and terror; they shall have such a burden of fear then as that hey shall account the hills and mountains ighter than it.

*Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.*] In this I conceive is implied another persuasive of this fear arising (2), from their relation to this world. *You are sojourners* and *strangers* (as here the word signifies), and a wary, circumspect carriage becomes strangers, because they are most exposed to wrongs and hard accidents. You are encompassed with enemies and snares; how can you be secure in the midst of them? This is not your rest; watchful fear becomes this your sojourning. Perfect peace and security are reserved for you at home, and that is the last term of this fear; it continues all the time of this sojourning life, dies not before us; we and it shall expire together.

III. This, then, is the term or continuance of this fear.

*Blessed is he that feareth always*, says Solomon, Prov. xxviii. 14; in secret and in society, in his own house and in God's. We must hear the word with fear, and preach it with fear, afraid to miscarry in our intentions and manners. *Serve the Lord with fear*, yea, in times of inward comfort and joy, yet *rejoice with trembling*. Psal. ii. 11. Not only when a man feels most his own weakness, but when he finds himself strongest. None are so high advanced in grace here below, as to be out of need of this grace: but when their sojourning shall be done, and they are come home to their father's house above, then no more fearing. No entrance for dangers there, and therefore no fear. A holy reverence of the majesty of God they shall indeed have then most of all, as the angels still have, because they shall see him most clearly, and because the more he is known the more he is reverenced; but this fear that relates to danger shall then vanish, for in that world there is neither sin, nor sorrow for sin, nor temptation to sin; no more conflicts, but after a full and final victory, an eternal peace, an everlasting triumph. Not only fear, but faith, and hope, do imply some imperfection not consistent with that blessed estate; and therefore all of them having obtained their end, shall end; *faith* in *sight*, *hope* in *possession*, and *fear* in *perfect safety*; and everlasting love and delight shall fill the whole soul in the vision of God.

VER. 18. Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

VER. 19. But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

IT is impossible for a Christian to give himself to conform to the world's ungodliness, unless first he forgets who he is, and by what means he attained to be what he is. Therefore the apostle, persuading his brethren to holiness, puts them in mind of this, as the strongest incentive. Not only have you the example of God set before you, as your father, to beget in you the love of holiness, as being your liveliest resemblance of him; and the justice of God as your judge, to argue you into a pious fear of offending him; but consider this, that he is your Redeemer; he hath bought out your liberty from sin and the world, to be altogether his; and think on the price laid down in this ransom; and these out of question will prevail with you.

We have here, 1. The evil dissuaded from, *viz.*, *A vain conversation*. 2. The dissuasion itself.

1. It is called *their vain conversation*. 2. *Received by tradition from their fathers*. By this I conceive is to be understood not only the superstitions and vain devices in religion, which abounded among the Jews by tradition, for which our Savior often reproved them while he was conversant among them, as we find in the gospel (and all this was meant, ver. 14, *by the lusts of their former ignorance*); but generally, all the corrupt and sinful customs of their lives; for it seems not so pertinent to his purpose when exhorting to holiness of life, to speak of their superstitious traditions, as of their other sinful habitudes, which are no less hereditary, and, by the power of example, traditional; which by reason of their common root in man's sinful nature, do so easily pass from parents to children, nature making their example powerful, and the corruption of nature giving it most power in that which is evil. And this is the rather mentioned to take away the force of it, and cut off that influence which it might have had in their minds. There is a kind of conversation that the authority of your father pleads for; but remember, that it is that very thing from which you are delivered, and you are called to a new state and form of life, and have a new pattern set before you, instead of that corrupt example.

It is one great error, not only in religion and manners, but even in human science, that men are ready to take things upon trust, unexamined, from those that went before them, partly out of easiness and sparing the pains of trial, partly out of a superstitious over-esteem of their authority; but the chief reason why corruptions in religion, and in the practice of preceding ages, take so much with posterity, is that before mentioned, the uni-

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versal sympathy and agreement which those evils have with the corrupt nature of man.

The prophet Ezekiel observes this particularly in the Jews, chap. xx. 24, *That their eyes were after their fathers' idols*, contrary to God's express forewarning, ver. 18. This was the great quarrel of the heathens against the Christian religion in the primitive times, that it was new and unknown to their fathers; and the ancient writers of those times are frequent in showing the vanity of this exception, particularly *Lactantius, Instit.* lib. 2, cap. 7, 8. The same prejudice doth the church of Rome sing over continually against the reformed religion: Where was it before Luther? *&c.* But this is a foolish and unreasonable diversion from the search of truth, because error is more at hand; or from the entertaining it, being found, because falsehood is in possession.

As in religion, so in the course and practice of men's lives, the stream of sin runs from one age into another, and every age makes it greater, adding somewhat to what it receives, as rivers grow in their course by the accession of brooks that fall into them; and every man when he is born falls like a drop into this main current of corruption, and so is carried down with it, and this by reason of its strength, and his own nature, which willingly dissolves into it, and runs along with it. In this is manifest the power of divine grace in a man's conversion, that it severs him so powerfully from the profane world, and gives him strength to run contrary to the great current of wickedness that is round about him, in his parents possibly, and in his kindred and friends, and in the most of men that he meets withal. The voice of God, that powerful word of effectual calling which he speaks into the heart, makes a man break through all, and leave all to follow God, as Abraham did, being called out from his kindred and father's house, to journey toward the land that God had promised him. And this is that which was spoken to the church and to each believing soul by the Spirit of God, *Forget also thine own people and thy father's house, so shall the king greatly delight in thy beauty.* Psal. xlv. 10, 11. Regard not what others think, though they be thy nearest friends, but study only to please him, and then thou shalt please him indeed. Do not deform thy face with looking out asquint to the custom of the world, but look straightforward on him, and so thou shalt be beautiful in his eyes. When God calls a man in a remarkable manner, his profane friends are all in a tumult; what needs this to be more precise than we and all your neighbors? But all this is a confused noise, that works nothing on the heart that the Lord hath touched: it must follow him, though by trampling upon friends and kindred, if they lie in the way. We see how powerfully a word from Christ drew his disciples to leave all and follow him. . . .

The *exhortation* is against all sinful and unholy conversation, by what authority and example soever recommended to us. The apostle's reasons in these words are strong and pressing; there is one expressed in the very name he gives it; *it is vain conversation.*

The mind of man, the guide and source of his actions, while it is estranged from God, is nothing but a forge of vanities. The Apostle St. Paul speaks this of the Gentiles, that *they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened*, Rom. i. 21. their great naturalists and philosophers not excepted; and the more they strove to play the wise men, the more they befooled themselves. Thus likewise, Eph. iv. 17. And thus the Lord complains by his prophet Isaiah, of the extreme folly of his people, ch. xliv. 20, and by Jeremy, that *their hearts are lodges of vain thoughts*, ch. iv. 14: and these are the true cause of a *vain conversation.*

The whole course of a man's life out of Christ, is nothing but a continual trading in vanity, running a circle of toil and labor, and reaping no profit at all. This is the vanity of every natural man's conversation, that not only others are not benefited by it, but it is fruitless to himself; there arises to him no solid good out of it. That is most truly vain which attains not its proper end; now, since all a man's endeavors aim at his satisfaction and contentment, that conversation which gives him nothing of that, but removes him further from it, is justly called *vain conversation. What fruit had ye*, says the apostle, *in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?* Rom. vi. 21. Either count that shame which at the best grows out of them, their fruit, or confess they have none; therefore they are called *the unfruitful works of darkness*, Eph. v. 11.

Let the voluptuous person say it out upon his death-bed, what pleasure or profit doth then abide with him of all his former sinful delights. Let him tell if there remain anything of them all, but that which he would gladly not have to remain, the sting of an accusing conscience, which is as lasting as the delight of sin was short and vanishing. Let the covetous and ambitious declare freely, even those of them who have prospered most in their pursuit of riches and honor, what ease all their possessions or titles do then help them to; whether their pains are the less because their chests are full, or their houses stately, or a multitude of friends and servants waiting on them with hat and knee. And if all these things can not ease their body, how much less can they quiet the mind! And therefore is it not true, that all pains in these things, and the uneven ways into which they sometimes stepped aside to serve those ends, and generally, that all the ways of sin wherein they have wearied themselves, were vain rollings and tossings up and down, not tending to a certain haven of

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peace and happiness? It is a lamentable thing to be deluded a whole life-time with a false dream. See Isaiah ii. 8.

You that are going on in the common road of sin, although many, and possibly your own parents, have trodden it before you, and the greatest part of those you now know are in it with you, and keep you company in it, yet, be persuaded to stop a little, and ask yourselves what is it you seek, or expect in the end of it. Would it not grieve any laboring man, to work hard all the day, and have no wages to look for at night? It is a greater loss to wear out our whole life, and in the evening of our days find nothing but anguish and vexation. Let us then think this, that so much of our life as is spent in the ways of sin is all lost, fruitless, and *vain conversation.*

And in so far as the apostle says here, *You are redeemed from this conversation,* this imports it to be a servile, slavish condition, as the other word, *vain,* expresses it to be fruitless. And this is the madness of a sinner, that he fancies liberty in that which is the basest thraldom; as those poor frantic persons that are lying ragged and bound in chains, yet imagine that they are kings, that their irons are chains of gold, their rags robes, and their filthy lodge a palace. As it is misery to be liable to the sentence of death, so it is slavery to be subject to the dominion of sin; and he that is delivered from the one, is likewise set free from the other. There is one redemption from both. He that is redeemed from destruction by the blood of Christ, is likewise redeemed from that vain and unholy conversation that leads to it. So, Tit. ii. 14. Our Redeemer was anointed for this purpose, not to free the captives from the sentence of death, and yet leave them still in prison, but to *proclaim liberty to them, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.* Isa. lxi. 1.

You easily persuade yourselves that Christ both died for you, and redeemed you from hell; but you consider not, that if it be so, he hath likewise redeemed you from your vain conversation, and hath set you free from the service of sin. Certainly, while you find not that, you can have no assurance of the other: if the chains of sin continue still upon you, for anything you can know, these chains do bind you over to the other *chains of darkness* the apostle speaks of, 2 Pet. ii. 4. Let us not delude ourselves; if we find the love of sin and of the world work stronger in our hearts than the love of Christ, we are not as yet partakers of his redemption.

But if we have indeed laid hold upon him as our Redeemer, then are we redeemed from the service of sin; not only from the grossest profaneness, but even from all kind of fruitless and *vain conversation.* And therefore ought we to *stand fast in that liberty, and not to entangle ourselves again to any of our former vanities.* Gal v. 1.

*Not redeemed with corruptible things.*] From the high price of our redemption, the apostle doth mainly enforce our esteem of it, and urge the preservation of that liberty so dearly bought, and the avoiding all that unholiness and vain conversation from which we are freed by that redemption. First, he expresseth it negatively, *not with corruptible things;* (Oh! foolish we, who hunt them, as if they were incorruptible and everlasting treasures!) no, not the best of them, those that are in highest account with men, *not with silver and gold;* these are not of any value at all toward the ransom of souls; they can not buy off the death of the body, nor purchase the continuance of temporal life, much less can they reach to the worth of spiritual and eternal life. The precious soul could not be redeemed but by blood, and by no blood but that of this spotless lamb, Jesus Christ, who is God equal with the Father; and therefore his blood is called *The blood of God,* Acts xx. So that the Apostle may well call it here *precious,* exceeding the whole world, and all things in it, in value. Therefore frustrate not the sufferings of Christ: if he shed his blood to redeem you from sin, be not false to his purpose.

*As a lamb without blemish.*] He is that great and everlasting sacrifice which gave value and virtue to all the sacrifices under the law: their blood was of no worth to the purging away of sin, but by relation to his blood; and the laws concerning the choice of the paschal lamb, or other lambs for sacrifice, were but obscure and imperfect shadows of his purity and perfections, who is the undefiled *Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.* John i. 29. A lamb in meekness and silence, *he opened not his mouth.* Isa. liii. 7. And in purity here *without spot or blemish. My well-beloved,* says the spouse, *is white and ruddy,* Cant. v. 10; white in spotless innocency, and red in suffering a bloody death.

*Forasmuch as ye know.*] It is that must make all this effectual, the right knowledge and due consideration of it. Ye do know it already, but I would have you know it better, more deeply and practically: turn it often over, be more in the study and meditation of it. There is work enough in it still for the most discerning mind; it is a mystery so deep that you shall never reach the bottom of it, and withal so useful that you shall find always new profit by it. Our folly is, we gape after new things, and yet are in effect ignorant of the things we think we know best. That learned apostle who knew so much, and spoke so many tongues, yet says, *I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* 1 Cor. ii. 2. And again he expresses this as the top of his ambition, *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.* Phil. iii. 10. That conformity is this only knowledge. He that hath his lusts un-

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mortified, and a heart unweaned from the world, though he know all the history of the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ, and can discourse well of them, yet indeed he knows them not.

If you would increase much in holiness, and be strong against the temptations to sin, this is the only art of it; view much, and so seek to know much of the death of Jesus Christ. Consider often at how high a rate we were redeemed from sin, and provide this answer for all the enticements of sin and the world: "Except you can offer my soul something beyond that price that was given for it on the cross, I can not hearken to you." "Far be it from me," will a Christian say, who considers this redemption, "that ever I should prefer a base lust, or anything in this world, or it all, to Him who gave himself to death for me, and paid my ransom with his blood. His matchless love hath freed me from the miserable captivity of sin, and hath for ever fastened me to the sweet yoke of his obedience. Let him alone to dwell and rule within me, and never let him go forth from my heart, who for my sake refused to come down from the cross."

VER. 20. Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world; but was manifest in these last times for you.

OF all those considerations (and there are many) that may move men to obedience, there is no one that persuades both more sweetly and strongly, than the sense of God's goodness and mercy toward men; and among all the evidences of that, there is none like the sending and giving of his Son for man's redemption; therefore the apostle, having mentioned that, insists further on it; and in these words expresses, 1. The purpose; 2. The performance; and 3. The application of it.

1. The purpose or *decree foreknown;* but it is well rendered, *foreordained*, for this knowing is decreeing, and there is little either solid truth or profit in the distinguishing them.

We say usually, that where there is little wisdom there is much chance; and comparatively among men, some are far more foresighted, and of further reach than others: yet the wisest and most provident men, both wanting skill to design all things aright, and power to act as they contrive, meet with many unexpected casualties and frequent disappointments in their undertakings. But with God, where both wisdom and power are infinite, there can be neither any chance nor resistance from without, nor any imperfection at all in the contrivance of things within himself, that can give cause to add, or abate, or alter anything in the frame of his purposes. The model of the whole world, and of all the course of time, was with him one and the same from all eternity, and whatsoever is brought to pass, is exactly answerable to that pattern, for with him *there is no change nor shadow of turning*. Jam. i. 17. There is nothing dark to the *Father of lights:* he sees at one view through all things, and all ages, from the beginning of time to the end of it, yea, from eternity to eternity. And this incomprehensible wisdom is too wonderful for us; we do but childishly stammer when we offer to speak of it.

It is no wonder that men beat their own brains, and knock their heads one against another, in the contest of their opinions, to little purpose, in their several mouldings of God's decree. Is not this to cut and square God's thoughts to ours, and examine his sovereign purposes by the low principles of human wisdom? How much more learned than all such knowledge, is the apostle's ignorance, when he cries out, *O! the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* Rom. xi. 33. Why then should any man debate what place, in the series of God's decrees, is to be assigned to this purpose of sending his Son in the flesh! Let us rather (seeing it is manifest that it was for the redemption of lost mankind) admire that same love of God to mankind, which appears in that purpose of our recovery by the *Word made flesh;* that before man had made himself miserable, yea, before either he or the world was made, this thought of boundless love was in the bosom of God; to send his Son forth thence, to bring fallen man out of misery, and restore him to happiness; and to do this, not only by taking on his nature, but the curse: to shift it off from us that were sunk under it, and to bear it himself, and by bearing to take it away. *He laid on him the iniquity of us all.* And to this he was appointed, says the apostle, Heb. iii. 2.

*Before the foundation of the world.*] *This we understand by faith, that the world was framed by the word of God.* Heb. xi. 3. Although the learned probably think it evincible by human reason, yet some of those who have gloried most in that, and are reputed generally masters of reason, have not seen it by that light. Therefore, that we may have a divine belief of it, we must learn it from the word of God, and be persuaded of its truth by the Spirit of God, that the whole world, and all things in it, were drawn out of nothing by his almighty power, who is the only eternal and increated Being, and therefore the fountain and source of being to all things.

*Foundation.*] In this word is plainly intimated the resemblance of the world to a building; and such a building it is, as doth evidence the greatness of Him who framed it; so spacious, rich, and comely, so firm a foundation, raised to so high and stately a roof, and set with variety of stars, as with jewels, therefore called, as some conceive it, *the work of his fingers*, Psal. viii., to express the curious artifice that appears in them. Though naturalists have attempted to give the reason of the earth's stability from its heaviness,



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which stays it necessarily in the lowest part of the world, yet that abates not our admiring the wisdom and power of God, in laying its foundation so, and establishing it; for it is his will that is the first cause of that, its nature, and hath appointed that to be the property of its heaviness, to fix it there; and therefore Job alleges this among the wonderful works of God, and evidences of his power, that *He hangeth the earth upon nothing.* Job xxvi. 7.

Before there was time, or place, or any creature, God, the blessed Trinity, was in himself, and as the prophet speaks, *inhabiting eternity*, completely happy in himself: but intending to manifest and communicate his goodness, he gave being to the world, and to time with it; made all to set forth his goodness, and the most excellent of his creatures to contemplate and enjoy it. But among all the works he intended before time, and in time effected, this is the masterpiece, which is here said to be foreordained, the manifesting of God in the flesh for man's redemption, and that by his Son Jesus Christ, as the *firstborn among many brethren*, in order that those appointed for salvation should be rescued from the common misery, and be made one mystical body, whereof Christ is the head, and so entitled to that everlasting glory and happiness that he hath purchased for them.

This, I say, is the great work, wherein all those glorious attributes shine jointly, the wisdom, and power, and goodness, justice, and mercy of God. As in great maps, or pictures, you will see the border decorated with meadows and fountains, and flowers, &c., represented in it, but in the middle you have the main design; thus is this foreordained redemption among the works of God; all his other works in the world, all the beauty of the creatures, and the succession of ages, and things that come to pass in them, are but as the border to this as the main piece. But as a foolish, unskilful beholder, not discerning the excellency of the principal piece in such maps or pictures, gazes only on the fair border, and goes no further, thus do the greatest part of us: our eyes are taken with the goodly show of the world and appearance of earthly things; but as for this great work of God, Christ *foreordained*, and in time sent for our redemption, though it most deserves our attentive regard, yet we do not view and consider it as we ought.

2. We have the performance of that purpose, *Was manifested in these last times for you.* He was manifested both by his incarnation, according to that word of the Apostle St. Paul, *manifested in the flesh*, 1 Tim. iii. 16, and manifested by his marvellous works and doctrine; by his sufferings and death, resurrection and ascension, by the sending down of the Holy Ghost according to his promise, and by the preaching of the gospel, in the fulness of time that God had appointed, wherein all the prophecies that foretold his coming, and all the types and ceremonies that prefigured him, had their accomplishment.

The times of the gospel are often called *the last times* by the prophets; for that the Jewish priesthood and ceremonies being abolished, that which succeeded was appointed by God to remain the same to the end of the world. Besides this, the time of our Savior's incarnation may be called *the last times*, because, although it were not near the end of time by many ages, yet in all probability it is much nearer the end of time than the beginning of it. Some resemble the time of his sufferings in the end of the world, to the Paschal Lamb which was slain in the evening.

It was doubtless the fit time; but notwithstanding the schoolmen offer at reasons to prove the fitness of it, as their humor is to prove all things, none dare, I think, conclude, but if God had so appointed, it might have been either sooner or later. And our safest way is to rest in this, that it was the fit time, because so it pleased him, and to seek no other reason why, having promised the Messiah so quickly after man's fall, he deferred his coming about four thousand years, and a great part of that time shut up the knowledge of himself and the true religion, within the narrow compass of that one nation of which Christ was to be born; of these and such like things, we can give no other reason than that which he teacheth us in a like case, *Even so, Father, because it seemeth good unto thee.* Matt. xi. 26.

3. The application of this manifestation, *For you.*] The apostle represents these things to those he writes to, particularly for their use; therefore he applies it to them, but without prejudice of the believers who went before, or of those who were to follow in after-ages. He who is here said to be *fore-appointed* before the foundation of the world, is therefore called *A Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.* Rev. xiii. 8. And as the virtue of his death looks backward to all preceding ages, whose faith and sacrifices looked forward to it; so the same death is of force and perpetual value to the end of the world. *After he had offered one sacrifice for sins*, says the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. x. 12, 14, *he sat down for ever on the right hand of God; for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* The cross on which he was extended, points, in the length of it, to heaven and earth, reconciling them together, and in the breadth of it, to former and following ages, as being equally salvation to both.

In this appropriating and peculiar interest in Jesus Christ lies our happiness, without which it avails not that he was ordained from eternity, and in time manifested. It is not the general contemplation, but the peculiar possession of Christ, that gives both solid comfort and strong persuasion to obedience

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and holiness, which is here the apostle's particular scope.

VER. 21. Who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.

Now, because it is faith that gives the soul this particular title to Jesus Christ, the apostle adds this, to declare whom he meant by *you*. *For you*, says he, *who by him do believe in God*, &c.

Where we have, 1. The complete object of faith. 2. The ground or warrant of it. The object, *God in Christ*. The ground or warrant, *In that he raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory*.

A man may have, while living out of Christ, yea, he must, he can not choose but have a conviction within him that there is a God; and further he may have, even out of Christ, some kind of belief of those things that are spoken concerning God: but to repose on God as his God and his salvation, which is indeed to believe in him, this can not be but where Christ is the *medium* through which we look upon God; for so long as we look upon God through our own guiltiness, we can see nothing but his wrath, and apprehend him as an armed enemy; and therefore are so far from resting on him as our happiness, that the more we view it, it puts us upon the more speed to fly from him, and to cry out, *Who can dwell with everlasting burnings, and abide with a consuming fire?* But our Savior, taking sin out of the way, puts himself between our sins and God, and so makes a wonderful change of our apprehension of him. When you look through a red glass, the whole heavens seem bloody; but through pure uncolored glass, you receive the clear light that is so refreshing and comfortable to behold. When sin unpardoned is between, and we look on God through that, we can perceive nothing but anger and enmity in his countenance; but make Christ once the *medium*, our pure Redeemer, and through him, as clear, transparent glass, the beams of God's favorable countenance shine in upon the soul. The Father can not look upon his well-beloved Son, but graciously and pleasingly. God looks on us out of Christ, sees us rebels, and fit to be condemned: we look on God as being just and powerful to punish us: but when Christ is between, God looks on us in him as justified, and we look on God in him as pacified, and see the smiles of his favorable countenance. Take Christ out, all is terrible; interpose him, all is full of peace; therefore set him always between, and by him we shall believe in God.

The warrant and ground of believing in God by Christ is this, that God *raised him from the dead, and gave him glory*, which evidences the full satisfaction of his death; and in all that work, both in his humiliation and exaltation, standing in our room, we may repute it his as ours. If all is paid that could be exacted of him, and therefore he set free from death, then are we acquitted, and have nothing to pay. If he was raised from the dead, and exalted to glory, then so shall we; he hath taken possession of that glory for us, and we may judge ourselves possessed of it already, because he, our head, possesseth it.

And this the last words of the verse confirm to us, implying this to be the very purpose and end for which God, having given him to death, *raised him up and gave him glory*; it is for this end, expressly, that *our faith and hope might be in God*. The last end is, that we may have life and glory through him; the nearer end, that in the meanwhile, till we attain them, we may have firm belief and hope of them, and rest on God as the giver of them, and so in part enjoy them beforehand, and be upheld in our joy and conflicts by the comfort of them. And as St. Stephen in his vision, Faith doth, in a spiritual way, look through all the visible heavens, and see Christ at the Father's right hand, and is comforted by that in the greatest troubles, though it were amid a shower of stones, as St. Stephen was. The comfort is no less than this, that being by faith made one with Christ, his present glory wherein he sits at the Father's right hand, is an assurance to us, that *where he is we shall be also*. John xiv. 3.

VER. 22. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.

JESUS CHRIST is made unto us of God, *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*, 1 Cor. i. 30. It is a known truth, and yet very needful to be often represented to us, that redemption and holiness are undivided companions, yea, that we are redeemed on purpose for this end, that we should be holy. The pressing of this, we see, is here the apostle's scope; and having by that reason enforced it in the general, he now takes that as concluded and confessed, and so makes use of it particularly to exhort to the exercise of that main Christian grace of *brotherly love*.

The obedience and holiness mentioned in the foregoing verses, comprehend the whole duties and frame of a Christian life toward God and men: and, having urged that in the general, he specifies this grace of mutual Christian love, as the great evidence of their sincerity and the truth of their love to God; for men are subject to much hypocrisy this way, and deceive themselves; if they find themselves diligent in religious exercises, they scarcely once ask their hearts how they stand affected this way, namely, in love to their brethren. They can come constantly to the church, and pray, it may be, at home too, and yet can not find in their hearts to forgive an injury.

As forgiving injuries argues the truth of

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piety, so it is that which makes all converse both sweet and profitable, and besides, it graces and commends men in their holy profession, to such as are without and strangers to it, yea, even to their enemies.

Therefore is it that our Savior doth so much recommend this to his disciples, and they to others, as we see in all their epistles. He gives it them as the very badge and livery by which they should be known for his followers, *By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if ye love one another*, xiii. 35. And St. Paul is frequent in exhorting to, and extolling this grace. See Rom. xii. 10, and xiii. 8; 1 Cor. i. 13; Gal. v. 13; Eph. iv. 2; and in many other places. He calls it *the bond of perfectness*, Col. iii. 14—that grace which unites and binds all together. So doth our apostle here, and often in this and the other epistle; and that beloved disciple St. John, who leaned on our Savior's breast, drank deep of that spring of love that was here, and therefore it streams forth so abundantly in his writings: they contain nothing so much as this divine doctrine of love.

We have here, 1. The due qualifications of it. 2. A Christian's obligation to it.

The *qualifications* are three; namely, *sincerity*, *purity*, and *fervency*. The *sincerity* is expressed in the former clause of the verse, *unfeigned love*, and repeated again in the latter part, that it be *with a pure heart*, as the *purity* is included in *fervency*.

1. Love must be *unfeigned*. It appears that this dissimulation is a disease that is very incident in this particular. The apostle St. Paul hath the same word, Rom. xii. 9, and the apostle St. John to the same sense, 1 John iii. 18. That it have that double reality which is opposed to double-dissembled love; that it be cordial and effectual; that the professing of it arise from truth of affection, and, as much as may be, be seconded with action; that both the heart and the hand may be the seal of it rather than the tongue: not court holy-water and empty noise of service and affection, that fears nothing more than to be put upon trial. Although thy brother, with whom thou convers'st, can not, it may be, see through thy false appearances, He who commands this love looks chiefly within, seeks it there, and, if he find it not there, hates them most who most pretend it; so that the art of dissembling, though ever so well studied, can not pass in this King's court, to whom all hearts are open, and all desires known. When, after variances, men are brought to an agreement, they are much subject to this, rather to cover their remaining malices with superficial verbal forgiveness, than to dislodge them, and free the heart of them. This is a poor self-deceit. As the philosopher said to him, who being ashamed that he was espied by him in a tavern in the outer room, withdrew himself to the inner, he called after him, "That is not the way out; the more you go that way, you will be the further within it:" so when hatreds are upon admonition not thrown out, but retire inward to hide themselves, they grow deeper and stronger than before; and those constrained semblances of reconcilement are but a false healing, do but skin the wound over, and therefore it usually breaks forth worse again.

How few there are that have truly maliceless hearts, and find this entire upright affection toward their brethren meeting them in their whole conversation, this *law of love* deeply impressed on their hearts, and from thence expressed in their words and actions, and that is *unfeigned love*, as real to their brethren as to themselves.

2. It must be *pure*, from a pure heart. This is not all one with the former, as some take it. It is true, doubleness or hypocrisy is an impurity, and a great one; but all impurity is not doubleness; one may really mean that friendship and affection he expresses, and yet it may be most contrary to that which is here required, because *impure* such a *brotherly love* as that of Simeon and Levi, brethren in iniquity, as the expressing them *brethren*, Gen. xlix., is taken to mean. When hearts are cemented together by impurity itself, by ungodly conversation and society in sin, as in uncleanness or drunkenness, and this is a swinish fraternity, a friendship which is contracted, as it were by wallowing in the same mire. Call it good fellowship, or what you will, all the fruit that in the end can be expected out of unholy friendliness and fellowship in sinning together, is, to be tormented together, and to add each to the torment of another.

The mutual love of Christians must be pure, arising from such causes as are pure and spiritual, from the sense of our Savior's command and of his example; for he himself joins that with it, *A new commandment give I you*, saith he, *that as I have loved you, so you also love one another*, John xiii. 34. They that are indeed lovers of God are united, by that their hearts meet in him, as in one centre: they can not but love one another. Where a godly man sees his Father's image, he is forced to love it; he loves those whom he perceives godly, so as to delight in them, because that image is in them; and those that appear destitute of it, he loves them so as to wish them partakers of that image. And this is all for God; he loves *amicum in Deo, et inimicum propter Deum:* that is, he loves a friend in God, and an enemy for God. And as the Christian's love is pure in its cause, so in its effects and exercise. His society and converse with any tend mainly to this, that he may mutually help and be helped in the knowledge and love of God; he desires most that he and his brethren may jointly mind their journey heavenward, and further one another in their way to the full enjoyment of God. And this is truly the love of a pure heart, which both begins and ends in God

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3. We must love *fervently*, not after a cold indifferent manner. Let the love of your brethren be as a fire within you, consuming that selfishness which is so contrary to it, and is so natural to men; let it set your thoughts on work to study how to do others good; let your love be an active love, intense within you, and extending itself in doing good to the souls and bodies of your brethren as they need, and you are able: *Alium re, alium consilio, alium Gratiâ* (Seneca *de beneficiis*, lib. i., c. 2). One by money, another by counsel, another by kindness.

It is self-love that contracts the heart, and shuts out all other love, both of God and man, save only so far as our own interest carries, and that is still self-love: but the love of God dilates the heart, purifies love, and extends it to all men, but after a special manner directs it to those who are more peculiarly beloved of him, and that is here the particular love required.

*Love of the brethren.*] In this is implied our obligation after a special manner to love those of *the household of faith*, because they are our *brethren*. This includes not only, as Abraham saith, *that there ought to be no strife* (Gen. xiii. 8), but it binds most strongly to this sincere, and pure, and fervent love; and therefore the apostle in the next verse repeats expressly the doctrine of the mysterious new birth, and explains it more fully, which he had mentioned in the entrance of the epistle, and again referred to, ver. 14, 17.

There is in this fervent love, sympathy with the griefs of our brethren, desire and endeavor to help them, bearing their infirmities, and recovering them too, if it may be; raising them when they fall, admonishing and reproving them as is needful, sometimes sharply and yet still in love; rejoicing in their good, in their gifts and graces, so far from envying them, that we be glad as if they were our own. There is the same blood running in their veins: you have the same Father and the same Spirit within you, and the same Jesus Christ, the head of that glorious fraternity, *The first-born among many brethren*, Rom. viii. 29; of whom the apostle saith, that *He hath recollected into one, all things in Heaven and in earth*, Eph. i. 10. The word is, *gathered them into one head*; and so suits very fitly to express our union in him. *In whom*, says he in the same epistle, Eph. iv. 16, *the whole body is fitly compacted together*; and he adds that which agrees to our purpose, that this body *grows up and edifies itself in love.* All the members receive spirits from the same head, and are useful and serviceable one to another, and to the whole body. Thus, these brethren, receiving of the same Spirit from their head, Christ, are most strongly bent to the good of one another. If there be but a thorn in the foot, the back boweth, the head stoops down, the eyes look, the hands reach to it, and endeavor its help and ease: in a word, all the members partake of the good and evil, one of another. Now, by how much this body is more spiritual and lively, so much the stronger must the union and love of the parts of it be each to every other. You are brethren by the same new birth, and born to the same inheritance, and such a one as shall not be an apple of strife among you, to beget debates and contentions: no, it is enough for all, and none shall prejudge another, but you shall have joy in the happiness one of another; seeing you shall then be perfect in love; all harmony, no difference in judgment or in affection, all your harps tuned to the same new song, which you shall sing for ever. Let that love begin here, which shall never end.

And this same union, I conceive, is likewise expressed in the first words of the verse. Seeing you are partakers of that work of sanctification by the same word, and the same Spirit, that works it in all the faithful, and are by that called and incorporated into that fraternity, therefore live in it and like it. You are purified to it: therefore love one another after that same manner purely. Let the profane world scoff at that name of *brethren*; you will not be so foolish as to be scorned out of it, being so honorable and happy; and the day is at hand wherein those that scoff you, would give much more than all that the best of them ever possessed in the world, to be admitted into your number.

*Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit.*] Here is, 1. The chief seat, or subject of the work of sanctification, *the soul*. 2. The subordinate means, *truth*. 3. The nature of it, *obeying of truth*. 4. The chief worker of it, *the Holy Spirit*.

For the *first*, the chief seat of sanctification, *the soul:* it is no doubt a work that goes through the whole man, renews and purifies all. Heb. x. 22; 2 Cor. vii. 1. But because it purifies the soul, therefore it is that it does purify all. Their impurity begins, Matt. xv. 18; not only evil thoughts, but all evil actions come forth from the heart, which is there all one with the soul; and therefore this purifying begins there, *makes the tree good that the fruit may be good*. It is not so much external performances that make the difference between men, as their inward temper. We meet here in the same place, and all partake of the same word and prayer; but how wide a difference is there, in God's eye, betwixt an unwashed profane heart in the same exercise, and a soul purified in some measure, *in obeying the truth*, and desirous to be further purified by further obeying it!

*Secondly*, That which is the subordinate means of this purity, is, *the truth*, or the word of God. It is truth, pure in itself, and it begets truth and purity in the heart, by teaching it concerning the holy and pure nature of God, showing it and his holy will, which is to us the rule of purity; and by representing Jesus Christ unto us as the

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fountain of our purity and renovation, from whose fulness we may *receive grace for grace.* John i. 16.

*Thirdly,* The nature of this work, that wherein the very being of this purifying consists, is, *the receiving or obeying of this truth.* So Gal. iii. 1, where it is put for right believing. The chief point of obedience is believing; the proper obedience to truth is to give credit to it; and this divine belief doth necessarily bring the whole soul into obedience and conformity to that pure truth which is in the word; and so the very purifying and renewing of the soul is this obedience of faith, as unbelief is its chief impurity and disobedience; therefore, Acts xv. 9, faith is said to *purify the heart.*

*Fourthly,* The chief worker of this sanctification, is, *the Holy Spirit of God.* They are said here to *purify themselves,* for it is certain and undeniable, that the soul itself doth act in believing or obeying the truth; but not of itself, it is not the first principle of motion. They purify their souls, but it is *by the Spirit.* They do it by His enlivening power, and a purifying virtue received from Him. Faith, or obeying the truth, works this purity, but the Holy Ghost works that faith; as in the forecited place, God is said to *purify their hearts by faith,* ver. 8. He doth that by giving them the Holy Ghost. The truth is pure and purifying, yet can it not of itself purify the soul, but by the obeying or believing of it: and the soul can not obey or believe but by the Spirit which works in it that faith, and by that faith purifies it, and works love in it. The impurity and earthliness of men's minds, is the great cause of disunion and disaffection among them, and of all their strifes. James iv. 1.

This spirit is that fire which refines and purifies the soul from the dross of earthly desires that possess it, and which sublimates it to the love of God and of his saints, because they are his, and are purified by the same spirit. It is the property of fire to draw together things of the same kind: the outward fire of enmities and persecution that are kindled against the godly by the world, doth somewhat, and if it were more considered by them, would do more, in this knitting their hearts closer one to another; but it is this inward pure and purifying fire of the Holy Ghost, that doth most powerfully unite them.

The true reason why there is so little truth of this Christian mutual love among those that are called Christians, is, because there is so little of this purifying obedience to the truth whence it flows. Faith unfeigned would beget this love unfeigned. Men may exhort to them both, but they require the hand of God to work them in the heart.

VER. 23. Being born again, not of corruptible seed: but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

THE two things which make up the apostle's exhortation, are the very sum of a Christian's duty; to walk as obedient children toward God, and as loving brethren one toward another: and that it may yet have the deeper impression, he here represents to them anew that new birth he mentioned before, by which they are the children of God, and so brethren.

We shall first speak of this regeneration; and then of the seed. 1*st*, Of the regeneration itself. This is the great dignity of believers, that they are the sons of God, John i. 12, as it is the great evidence of the love of God, that he hath bestowed this dignity on them. 1 John iii. 1. For they are no way needful to him: he had from eternity a Son perfectly like himself, *the character of his person,* Heb. i. 3, and one Spirit proceeding from both; and there is no creation, neither the first nor the second, can add anything to those and their happiness. It is most true of that blessed Trinity, *Satis amplum alter alteri theatrum sumus.* But the gracious purpose of God to impart his goodness appears in this, that he hath made himself such a multitude of sons, not only angels that are so called, but man, a little lower than they in nature, yet dignified with this name in his creation, Luke iii. 38, *Which was the son of Adam, which was the Son of God.* He had not only the impression of God's footsteps (as they speak), which all the creatures have, but of his image. And most of all in this, is his rich grace magnified, that sin having defaced that image, and so degraded man from his honor, and divested him of that title of sonship, and stamped our polluted nature with the marks of vileness and bondage, yea, with the very image of Satan, rebellion and enmity against God; that out of mankind thus ruined and degenerated, God should raise to himself a new race and generation of sons.

For this design was the *Word made flesh,* John i. 12, the Son made man, to make men the sons of God. And it is by him alone we are restored to this; they who receive him, receive with him, and in him this privilege, ver. 12. And therefore it is a sonship by adoption, and is so called in Scripture, in difference from his eternal and ineffable generation, who is, and was, *the only begotten Son of God.* Yet, that we may know that this Divine adoption is not a mere outward relative name, as that of men, the sonship of the saints is here, and often elsewhere in Scripture, expressed by *new generation,* and *new birth.* They are *begotten of God.* John i. 13; 1 John ii. 29. A new being, a spiritual life, is communicated to them; they have in them of their Father's Spirit; and this is derived to them through Christ, and therefore called his Spirit. Gal. iv. 6. They are not only accounted of the family of God by adoption, but by this new birth they are indeed his children, partakers of the Divine nature, as our apostle expresseth it.

Now though it be easy to speak and hear the words of this doctrine, yet the truth itself that is in it, is so high and mysterious, that it

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is altogether impossible, without a portion of this new nature, to conceive of it. Corrupt nature can not understand it. What wonder that there is nothing of it in the subtilest schools of philosophers, when a very *doctor in Israel* mistook it grossly! John iii. 10. It is indeed a great mystery, and he that was the sublimest of all the evangelists, and therefore called the divine, the soaring eagle (as they compare him), he is more abundant in this subject than the rest.

And the most profitable way of considering this regeneration and sonship, is certainly to follow the light of those holy writings, and not to jangle in disputes about the order and manner of it, of which, though somewhat may be profitably said, and safely, namely, so much as the Scripture speaks, yet much that is spoken of it, and debated by many, is but a useless expense of time and pains. What those previous dispositions are, and how far they go, and where is the mark or point of difference between them and the infusion of spiritual life, I conceive not so easily determinable.

If naturalists and physicians can not agree upon the order of formation of the parts of the human body in the womb, how much less can we be peremptory in the other! If there be so many wonders (as indeed there be) in the natural structure and frame of man, how much richer in wonders must this Divine and supernatural generation be! See how David speaks of the former. Psal. xiv. 15. Things spiritual being more refined than material things, their workmanship must be far more wonderful and curious. But then, it must be viewed with a spiritual eye. There is an unspeakable lustre and beauty of the new creature, by the mixture of all Divine graces, each setting off another, as so many rich several colors in embroidery; but who can trace that invisible hand that works it, so as to determine of the order, and to say which was first, which second, and so on; whether faith, or repentance, and all graces, &c.? This is certain, that these and all graces do inseparably make up the same work, and are all in the new formation of every soul that is born again.

If the ways of God's universal providence be untraceable, then most of all the workings of his grace are conducted in a secret unperceivable way in this new birth. He gives this spiritual being as the dew, which is silently and insensibly formed, and this generation of the sons of God is compared to it by the Psalmist, Psal. cx. 3: they have this original from Heaven as the dew. *Except a man be born from above, he can not enter into the kingdom of God.* John iii. 3. And it is the peculiar work of the Spirit of God; as he himself speaks of the dew to Job, Job xxxviii. 28, *Hath the rain a father, or who hath begotten the drops of the dew?* The sharpest wits are to seek in the knowledge and discovery of it, as Job speaketh of a way that no fowl knoweth, and *which the vulture's eye hath not seen.* Chap. xxviii. 7.

To contest much, how in this regeneration he works upon the will, and renews it, is to little purpose, provided this be granted, that it is in his power to regenerate and renew a man at his pleasure: and how is it possible not to grant this, unless we will run into that error, to think that God hath made a creature too hard for himself to rule, or hath willingly exempted it? And shall the works of the Almighty, especially this work, wherein most of all others he glories, fail in his hand, and remain imperfect? Shall there be any abortive births whereof God is the father? *Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth?* Isa. lxvi. 9. No; no sinner so dead, but there is virtue in his hand to revive out of the very stones. Though the most impenitent hearts are as stones within them yet he *can make of them children to Abraham.* Luke iii. 8. He can dig out *the heart of stone, and put a heart of flesh* in its place, Ezek. xxvi. 26; otherwise, he would not have made such a promise. *Not of flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.* John i. 13. If his sovereign will is not a sufficient principle of this regeneration, why then says the Apostle St. James, *Of his own will begat he us?* And he adds the subordinate cause, *By the word of truth,* James i. 18, which is here called the immortal seed of this new birth.

Therefore it is that the Lord hath appointed the continuance of the ministry of this word, to the end that his church may be still fruitful, bringing forth sons unto him; that the assemblies of his people may be like *flocks of sheep coming up from the washing, none barren among them.* Cant. iv. 2.

Though the ministers of this word, by reason of their employment in dispensing it, have, by the Scriptures, the relation of parents imparted to them (which is an exceeding great dignity for them as they are called *co-workers* with God; and the same apostle that writes so, calls the Galatians his *little children, of whom he travailed in birth again till Christ were formed in them;* and the ministers of God have often very much pain in this travail); yet the privilege of the father of spirits remains untouched, which is, effectually to beget again those same spirits which he creates, and to make that seed of the word fruitful in the way and at the season that it may please him. The preacher of the word, be he never so powerful, can cast this seed only into the ear; his hand reaches no farther; and the hearer, by his attention, may convey it into his head; but it is the supreme father and teacher above who carries it into the heart, the only soil wherein it proves lively and fruitful. One man can not reach the heart of another: how should he then renew its fruitfulness? If natural births have been always acknowledged to belong to God's [illegible]

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3, *Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward;* and so Jacob answered wisely to his wife's foolish passion, Gen. xxx. 2, *Am I in God's stead?*) how much more is this new birth wholly dependant on his hand!

But though this word can not beget without him, yet it is by this word that he begets, and ordinarily not without it. It is true that the substantial eternal word is to us (as we said) the spring of this new birth and life, the head from whom the spirits of this supernatural life flow; but that by *the word* here, is meant the gospel, the apostle puts out of doubt, *verse* the last, *And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.* Therefore thus is this word really the seed of this new birth, because it contains and declares that other word, the Son of God, as our life. The word is spoken in common, and so is the same to all hearers; but then, all hearts being naturally shut against it, God doth by his own hand open some to receive it, and mixes it with faith; and those it renews, and restoreth in them the image of God, draws the traces of it anew, and makes them the sons of God. *My doctrine shall drop as the dew*, says Moses, Deut. xxxii. 2. The word, as a heavenly dew, not falling beside, but dropped into the heart by the hand of God's own Spirit, makes it all become spiritual and heavenly, and turns it into one of those drops of dew that the children of God are compared to, Psalm cx. 3. *Thou hast the dew of thy youth.*

The natural estate of the soul is darkness, and the word, as a divine light shining into it, transforms the soul into its own nature; so that as the word is called light, so is the soul that is renewed by it. *Ye were darkness, but now are ye*, not only enlightened, but *light in the Lord*, Eph. v. 8. All the evils of the natural mind are often comprised under the name of darkness and error, and therefore is the whole work of conversion likewise signified by light and truth: *He begat us by the word of truth*, Jam. i. 18. So 2 Cor. iv. 16, alluding to the first *Fiat Lux*, or, *Let there be light*, in the creation. The word brought within the soul by the Spirit, lets it see its own necessity, and Christ's sufficiency convinceth it thoroughly, and causeth it to cast over itself upon him for life; and this is the very begetting of it again to eternal life.

So that this efficacy of the word to prove successful seed, doth not hang upon the different abilities of the preachers, their having more or less rhetoric or learning. It is true, eloquence hath a great advantage in civil and moral things to persuade, and to draw the hearers by the ears, almost which way it will; but in this spiritual work, to revive a soul, to beget it anew, the influence of heaven is the main thing requisite. There is no way so common and plain (being warranted by God in the delivery of saving truth), but the Spirit of God can revive the soul by it; and the most skilful and authoritative way, yea, being withal very spiritual, yet may effect nothing, because left alone to itself. One word of holy Scripture, or of truth conformable to it, may be the principle of regeneration to him that hath heard multitudes of excellent sermons, and hath often read the whole bible, and hath still continued unchanged. If the Spirit of God preach that one or any such word to the soul, *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever should believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 15, it will be cast down with the fear of perishing, and driven out of itself by that, and raised up and drawn to Jesus Christ by the hope of everlasting life; it will believe on him that it may have life, and be inflamed with the love of God, and give itself to him who so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son to purchase for us that everlasting life. Thus may that word prove this immortal seed, which, though very often read and heard before, was but a dead letter. A drop of those liquors which are called spirits operates more than large draughts of other waters; one word spoken by the Lord to the heart is all spirit, and doth that which whole streams of man's eloquence could never effect.

In hearing of the word, men look usually too much upon men, and forget from what spring the word hath its power; they observe too narrowly the different hand of the sowers, and too little depend on his hand, who is great Lord of both seed-time and harvest. Be it sown by a weak hand, or a stronger, the immortal seed is still the same; yea, suppose the worst, that it be a foul hand that sows it, that the preacher himself be not so sanctified and of so edifying a life as you would wish, yet, the seed itself, being good, contracts no defilement, and may be effectual to regeneration in some, and to the strengthening of others; although he that is not renewed by it himself, can not have much hope of success, nor reap much comfort by it, and usually doth not seek nor regard it much; but all instruments are alike in an Almighty hand.

Hence learn, 1. That true conversion is not so slight a work as we commonly account it. It is not the outward change of some bad customs, which gains the name of a reformed man, in the ordinary dialect; it is a new birth and being, and elsewhere called *a new creation.* Though it be but a change in qualities, yet it is such a one, and the qualities are so far different, that it bears the name of the most substantial productions from *children of disobedience*, and that which is linked with it, *heirs of wrath*, to be *sons of God, and heirs of glory!* They have a new spirit given them, a free, princely, noble spirit, as the word is, Psal. ii. 10, and this spirit acts in their life and actions.

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2. Consider this dignity, and be kindled with an ambition worthy of it. How doth a Christian pity that poor vanity which men make so much noise about, of their kindred and extraction? This is worth glorying in indeed, to be of the highest blood-royal, sons of the King of kings by this new birth, and in the nearest relation to him. This adds matchless honor to that birth which is so honorable in the esteem of the world.

But we all pretend to be of this number. Would we not study to cozen ourselves, the discovery whether we are, or not, would not be so hard.

In many, their false confidence is too evident; there is no appearance in them of the Spirit of God, not a footstep like his leading, nor any trace of that character, Rom. viii. 14, *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God;* not a lineament of God's visage, as their Father. *If ye know that he is righteous* (says St. John, ch. ii. 29), *ye know then that every one that doth righteousness is born of him.* And so, on the other hand, how contrary to the most holy God, the lover and fountain of holiness, are they who swinishly love to wallow in the mire of unholiness! Is swearing and cursing the accent of the regenerate, the children of God? No; it is the language of hell. Do children delight to indignify and dishonor their father's name? No; earthly-mindedness is a countersign. Shall the king's children, *they that were brought up in scarlet* (as Jeremiah laments), embrace *the dunghill?* Lam. iv. 5. Princes, by their high birth, and education, have usually their hearts filled with far higher thoughts than mean persons: the children of the poorest sort being pinched that way, their greatest thoughts, as they grow up, are, ordinarily, how they shall shift to live, how they shall get their bread; but princes think either of the conquest or governing of kingdoms. Are you not born to a better inheritance, if indeed you are born again: why then do you vilify yourselves? Why are you not more in prayer? There are no dumb children among those that are born of God; they have all that Spirit of prayer by which they not only speak, but *cry, Abba, Father.*

*2dly.* We come to consider the seed of this regeneration, *the word of God.* The most part of us esteem the preaching of the word, as a transient discourse that amuses us for an hour. We look for no more, and therefore we find no more. We receive it not as the immortal seed of our regeneration, as *the ingrafted word that is able to save our souls.* Jam. i. 21. Oh! learn to reverence this holy and happy ordinance of God, this word of life, and know, that they who are not regenerated, and so saved by it, shall be judged by it.

*Not of corruptible seed.*] It is a main cause of the unsuitable and unworthy behavior of Christians (those that profess themselves such), that a great part of them either do not know, or at least do not seriously and frequently consider, what is indeed the estate and quality of Christians, how excellent and of what descent their new nature is; therefore they are often to be reminded of this. Our apostle here doth so, and by it binds on all his exhortations.

Of this new being we have here these two things specified: 1. Its high original from God, *Begotten again of his word:* 2. That which so much commends good things, its duration. And this follows from the other; for if the principle of this be *incorruptible*, itself must be so too. The word of God is not only a living and ever-abiding word in itself, but likewise in reference to this new birth and spiritual life of a Christian; and in this sense that which is here spoken of it, is intended: it is therefore called, not only an abiding word but *incorruptible seed*, which expressly relates to regeneration. And because we are most sensible of the good and evil of things by comparison, the everlastingness of the word and of that spiritual life which it begets, is set off by the frailty and shortness of natural life, and of all the good that concerns it. This the apostle expresseth in the words of Isaiah, in the next verse.

VER. 24. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass: the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.

IN expressing the vanity and frailty of the natural life of man, it agrees very well with the subject to call him *flesh*, giving to the whole man the name of his corruptible part, both to make the wretched and perishing condition of this life more sensible, and man the more humble by it; for though by providing all for the flesh, and bestowing his whole time in the endeavors which are of the flesh's concernment, he remembers it too much, and forgets his spiritual and immortal part; yet, in that over-eager care for the flesh, he seems, in some sense, to forget that he is flesh, or, at least, that flesh is perishing because flesh; extending his desires and projects so far for the flesh, as if it were immortal, and should always abide to enjoy and use these things. As the philosopher said of his countrymen, upbraiding at once their surfeitings and excess in feasting, and their sumptuousness in building, "That they ate as if they meant to die to-morrow, and yet built as if they were never to die:" thus, in men's immoderate pursuits of earth, they seem both to forget they are anything else beside flesh, and in this sense, too, to forget that they are flesh, that is, mortal and perishing; they rightly remember neither their immortality nor their mortality. If we consider what it is to be flesh, the naming of that were sufficient to the purpose: All man is flesh; but it is plainer thus, *All flesh is grass.* Thus, in the lxxviiith Psalm, *He remembered that they were but flesh;* that speaks their frailty



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enough; but it is added, to make the vanity of their estate the clearer—*a wind that passeth and cometh not again.* So Psal. ciii. 15. *As for man, his days are as grass, as a flower of the field so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more.*

This natural life is compared, even by natural men, to the vainest things, and scarcely find they things light enough to express its *vanity;* as it is here called *grass,* so they have compared the generations of men to the leaves of trees. But the light of Scripture doth most discover this, and it is a lesson that requires the Spirit of God to teach it aright. *Teach us* (says Moses, Psal. xc. 12) *so to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.* And David (Psal. xxxix. 4), *Make me to know my life, how frail I am.* So James iv. 14, *What is your life? it is even a vapor.* And here it is called *grass.* So Job xiv. 1, 2, *Man that is born of a woman, is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down.*

Grass hath its root in the earth, and is fed by the moisture of it for a while; but besides that, it is under the hazard of such weather as favors it not, or of the scythe that cuts it down: give it all the forbearance that may be, let it be free from both those, yet how quickly will it wither of itself! Set aside those many accidents, the smallest of which is able to destroy our natural life, the diseases of our own bodies, and outward violences, and casualties that cut down many in their greenness, in the flower of their youth, the utmost term is not long; in the course of nature it will wither. Our life indeed is a lighted torch, either blown out by some stroke or some wind, or, if spared, yet within a while it burns away, and will die out of itself.

*And all the glory of man.*] This is elegantly added. There is indeed a great deal of seeming difference between the outward conditions of life among men. Shall the rich, and honorable, and beautiful, and healthful, go in together, under the same name, with the baser and unhappier part, the poor, wretched sort of the world, who seem to be born for nothing but sufferings and miseries? At least hath the wise no advantage beyond the fools? Is all grass? Make you no distinction? No; *all is grass,* or if you will have some other name, be it so: once, this is true, that all flesh is grass: and if that glory which shines so much in your eyes, must have a difference, then this is all it can have —it is but *the flower* of that same grass; somewhat above the common grass in gayness, a little comelier, and better apparelled than it, but partaker of its frail and fading nature; it hath no privilege nor immunity that way; yea, of the two, is the less durable, and usually shorter lived; at the best it decays with it: *The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.*

How easily and quickly hath the highest splendor of a man's prosperity been blasted, either by men's power, or by the immediate hand of God! The Spirit of the Lord blows upon it (as Isaiah there says), and by that, not only withers the grass, but the flower fades though never so fair. *When thou correctest man for iniquity,* says David, *thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth.* Psal. xxxix. 11. How many have the casualties of fire, or war, or shipwreck, in one day, or in one night, or in a small part of either, turned out of great riches into extreme poverty! And the instances are not few, of those who have on a sudden fallen from the top of honor into the foulest disgraces, not by degrees coming down the stair they went up, but tumbled down headlong. And the most vigorous beauty and strength of body, how doth a few days' sickness, or if it escape that, a few years' time, blast that flower! Yea, those higher advantages which have somewhat both of truer and more lasting beauty in them, the endowments of wit, and learning, and eloquence, yea, and of moral goodness, and virtue, yet they can not rise above this word, they are still, in all their glory, but the *flower of grass;* their root is in the earth. Natural ornaments are of some use in this present life, but they reach no farther. When men have wasted their strength, and endured the toil of study night and day, it is but a small parcel of knowledge they can attain to, and they are forced to lie down in the dust in the midst of their pursuit of it: that head that lodges most sciences shall within a while be disfurnished of them all; and the tongue that speaks most languages be silenced.

The great projects of kings and princes, and they also themselves, come under this same notion; all the vast designs that are framing in their heads fall to the ground in a moment; *They return to their dust and in that day all their thoughts perish.* Psal. cxlvi. 4. Archimedes was killed in the midst of his demonstration.

If they themselves did consider this in the heat of their affairs, it would much allay the swelling and loftiness of their minds; and if they who live upon their favor would consider it, they would not value it at so high a rate, and buy it so dear as often they do. *Men of low degree are vanity,* says the Psalmist (Psal. lxii. 9), but he adds, *Men of high degree are a lie.* From base, mean persons we expect nothing; but the estate of great persons promises fair, and often keeps not; therefore they are a lie, although they can least endure that word.

They are, in respect of mean persons, as the flower to the grass; a somewhat fairer lustre they have, but no more endurance, nor exemption from decaying. Thus then, it is a universal and undeniable truth: it begins here with διότι, and is as sure a conclusion as the surest of those in their best demonstra-

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tions, which they call διότι. And as particular men, so, whole states and kingdoms have thus their budding, flourishing, and withering, and it is in both as with flowers—when they are fullest spread, then they are near their declining and withering. And thus it is with all whole generations of men upon earth: as Solomon says, *One goeth, and another cometh*, Eccl. i. 4; but not a word of abiding at all. We, in our thoughts, shut up death into a very narrow compass, namely, into the moment of our expiring; but the truth is, as the moralist observes, it goes through all our life; for we are still losing and spending life as we enjoy it, yea, our very enjoying of it is the spending of it. Yesterday's life is dead today, and so shall this day's life be to-morrow. *We spend our years*, says Moses, *as a tale* (Psal. xc. 8), or as a thought, so swift and vanishing is it. Every word helps a tale toward its end; while it lasts, it is generally vanity, and when it is done, it vanishes as a sound in the air. What is become of all the pompous solemnities of kings and princes at their births and marriages, coronations and triumphs? They are now as a dream; as St. Luke (Acts xxv. 23) calls the pomp of Agrippa and Bernice, φαντασία, a mere phantasy.

Hence, learn the folly and pride of man, who can glory and please himself in the frail and wretched being he hath here, who doats on this poor natural life, and can not be persuaded to think on one higher and more abiding, although the course of time, and his daily experience, tell him this truth, that *all flesh is grass*. Yea, the prophet prefixes to these words a command of crying; they must be shouted aloud in our ears, ere we will hear them, and by that time the sound of the cry is done, we have forgotten it again. Would we consider this, in the midst of those vanities that toss our light minds to and fro, it would give us wiser thoughts, and ballast our hearts; make them more solid and steadfast in those spiritual endeavors which concern a durable condition, a being that abides for ever; in comparison of which, the longest term of natural life is less than a moment, and the happiest estate of it but a heap of miseries. Were all of us more constantly prosperous than any one of us is, yet that one thing were enough to cry down the price we put upon this life, that it continues not. As he answered to one who had a mind to flatter him in the midst of a pompous triumph, by saying, What is wanting here? *Continuance*, said he. It was wisely said at any time, but wisest of all, to have so sober a thought in such a solemnity, in which weak heads can not escape either to be wholly drunk, or somewhat giddy at least. Surely we forget this, when we grow vain upon any human glory or advantage; the color of it pleases us, and we forget that it is but a flower, and foolishly over-esteem it. This is like hat madness upon flowers, which is somewhere prevalent, where they will give as much for one flower as would buy a good dwelling-house. Is it not a most foolish bargain, to bestow continual pains and diligence upon the purchasing of great possessions or honors, if we believe this, that the best of them is no other than a short-lived flower, and to neglect the purchase of those glorious mansions of eternity, a garland of such flowers as wither not, an unfading crown, that everlasting life, and those everlasting pleasures that are at the right hand of God?

Now, that life which shall never end must begin here; it is the new spiritual life, whereof the word of God is the immortal seed; and in opposition to corruptible seed and the corruptible life of flesh, it is here said to endure for ever. And for this end is the frailty of natural life mentioned, that our affections may be drawn off from it to this spiritual life, which is not subject unto death.

VER. 25. But the word of the Lord endureth for ever; and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

THE word of God is so like himself, and carries so plainly the image and impression of his power and wisdom, that where they are spoken of together, it is sometimes doubtful whether the expressions are to be referred to himself or to his word (as Heb. iv. 12; and so here): but there is no hazard in referring them either way, seeing there is truth in both, and pertinency too; for they who refer them to God, affirm that they are intended for the extolling of his word, being the subject in hand, and that we may know it to be like him. But I rather think here that the apostle speaks of the word; it is said to be quick or living (ζῶν) in the fore-cited text, as well as in the passage before us; and the phrase *abiding for ever*, is expressly repeated of it here, in the prophet's words. And (with respect to those learned men that apply them to God) I remember not that this *abiding for ever* is used to express God's eternity in himself. Howsoever, this incorruptible seed is the living and everlasting word of the living and everlasting God, and is therefore such, because he, whose it is, is such.

Now, this is not to be taken in an abstract sense of the word only in its nature, but as the principle of regeneration, the seed of this new life; because the word is enlivening and living, therefore they with whom it is effectual, and into whose hearts it is received, are begotten again and made alive by it; and because the word is incorruptible, and endureth for ever, therefore that life begotten by it is such too, can not perish or be cut down, as the natural life; no, this spiritual life of grace is the certain beginning of that eternal life of glory, and shall issue in it, and therefore hath no end.

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As the word of God in itself can not be abolished, but surpasses the permanence of heaven and earth, as our Savior teaches; and all the attempts of men against the Divine truth of that word to undo it are as vain as if they should consult to pluck the sun out of the firmament; so, likewise, in the heart of a Christian, it is immortal and incorruptible. Where it is once received by faith, it can not be obliterated again: all the powers of darkness can not destroy it, although they be never so diligent in their attempts that way. And this is the comfort of the saints, that though the life, which God by his word hath breathed into their souls, have many and strong enemies, such as they themselves could never hold out against, yet for his own glory and his promise sake, he will maintain that life, and bring it to its perfection; *God will perfect that which concerneth me*, saith the psalmist, Psal. cxxxviii. 8. It is grossly contrary to the truth of the Scriptures to imagine that they who are thus renewed can be unborn again. This new birth is but once, of one kind: though they are subject to frailties and weaknesses here in this spiritual life, yet not to death any more, nor to such way of sinning as would extinguish this life. This is that which the Apostle John says, *He that is born of God sinneth not;* and the reason he adds is the same that is here given, the permanence and incorruptibleness of this word, *The seed of God abideth in him.* John iii. 9.

*This is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.*] It is not sufficient to have these thoughts of the word of God in a general way, and not to know what that word is; but we must be persuaded that that word which is *preached to us* is this very word of so excellent virtue, and of which these high things are spoken; that it is *incorruptible* and *abideth for ever*, and therefore surpasses all the world, and all the excellencies and glory of it. Although delivered by weak men—the apostles, and by far weaker than they in the constant ministry of it—yet it loseth none of its own virtue; for that depends upon the first Owner and author of it, the everliving GOD, who by it begets his chosen unto life eternal.

This, therefore, is that which we should learn thus to hear, and thus to receive, esteem, and love, this holy, this living word; to despise all the glittering vanities of this perishing life, all outward pomp, yea, all inward worth, all wisdom and natural endowments of mind, in comparison of the heavenly light of the gospel preached unto us: rather to hazard all than lose that, and banish all other things from the place that is due to it; to lodge it alone in our hearts, as our only treasure here, and the certain pledge of that treasure of glory laid up for us in heaven. To which blessed state may God of his infinite mercy bring us! *Amen.*

## CHAPTER II.

VER. 1. Wherefore laying aside all malice and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings;

VER. 2. As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.

THE same power and goodness of God that manifests itself in giving being to his creatures, appears likewise in sustaining and preserving them. To give being is the first, and to support it is the continued effect of that power and goodness. Thus it is both in the first creation, and in the second. In the first, the creatures to which he gave life, he provided with convenient nourishment to uphold that life (Gen. i. 11): so here, in the close of the former chapter, we find the doctrine of the new birth and life of a Christian, and in the beginning of this, the proper food of that life. And it is the same word by which we there find it to be begotten, that is here the nourishment of it; and therefore Christians are here exhorted by the apostle so to esteem and so to use it; and that is the main scope of the words.

*Observe* in general: The word, the principle, and the support of our spiritual being, is both the *incorruptible seed* and the *incorruptible food* of that new life of grace, which must therefore be an incorruptible life; and this may convince us, that the ordinary thoughts, even of us who hear this word, are far below the true excellency and worth of it. The stream of custom and our profession bring us hither, and we sit out our hour under the sound of this word; but how few consider and prize it as the great ordinance of God for the salvation of souls, the beginner and the sustainer of the Divine life of grace within us! And certainly, until we have these thoughts of it, and seek to feel it thus ourselves, although we hear it most frequently, and let slip no occasion, yea, hear it with attention, and some present delight, yet still we miss the right use of it, and turn it from its true end, while we take it not as *that ingrafted word which is able to save our souls.* James i. 21.

Thus ought they who preach to speak it: to endeavor their utmost to accommodate it to this end, that sinners may be converted, begotten again, and believers nourished and strengthened in their spiritual life; to regard no lower end, but aim steadily at that mark. Their hearts and tongues ought to be set on fire with holy zeal for God and love to souls, kindled by the Holy Ghost, that came down on the apostles in the shape of fiery tongues.

And those that hear should remember this as the end of their hearing, that they may receive spiritual life and strength by the word. For though it seems a poor despicable business, that a frail sinful man like yourselves should speak a few words in your hearing, yet, look upon it as the way wherein God

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communicates happiness to those who believe, and works that believing unto happiness, alters the whole frame of the soul, and makes a new creation, as it begets it again to the inheritance of glory. Consider it thus, which is its true notion; and then what can be so precious? Let the world disesteem it as they will, know ye, that *it is the power of God unto salvation. The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto them that are saved, it is the power of God*, says the apostle, 1 Cor. i. 18. And if you would have the experience of this, if you would have life and growth by it, you must look above the poor worthless messenger, and call in His almighty help, who is the Lord of life. As the philosophers affirm, that if the heavens should stand still, there would be no generation or flourishing of anything here below, so it is the moving and influence of the Spirit that makes the church fruitful. Would you but do this before you come here, present the blindness of your minds and the deadness of your hearts to God, and say, "Lord, here is an opportunity for thee to show the power of thy word. I would find life and strength in it; but neither can I who hear, nor he that speaks, make it thus unto me: that is thy prerogative; say thou the word, and it shall be done." *God said let there be light, and it was light.*

In this exhortation to the due use of the word, the apostle continues the resemblance of that new birth he mentioned in the preceding chapter.

*As newborn babes.*] Be not satisfied with yourselves, till you find some evidence of this new, this supernatural life. There be delights and comforts in this life, in its lowest condition, that would persuade us to look after it, if we knew them; but as the most can not be made sensible of these, consider therefore the end of it. Better never to have been than not to have been partaker of this new being. *Except a man be born again*, says our Savior, *he can not enter into the kingdom of God*, John iii. 3. Surely they that are not born again, shall one day wish they had never been born. What a poor wretched thing is the life that we have here! a very heap of follies and miseries! Now if we would share in a happier being after it, in that life which ends not, it must begin here. Grace and glory are one and the same life, only with this difference, that the one is the beginning, and the other the perfection of it; or, if we do call them two several lives, yet the one is the undoubted pledge of the other. It was a strange word for a heathen to say, that that day of death we fear so, *æterni natalis est, is the birthday of eternity.* Thus it is indeed to those who are here born again: this new birth of grace is the sure earnest and pledge of that birthday of glory. Why do we not then labor to make this certain by the former? Is it not a fearful thing to spend our days in vanity, and then lie down in darkness and sorrow for ever; to disregard the life of our soul, while we may and should be provident for it, and then, when it is going out, cry, "*Quò nunc abibis?* Whither art thou going, O my soul?"

But this new life puts us out of the danger and fear of that eternal death. *We are passed from death to life*, says St. John, 1 John iii. 14, speaking of those who are born again; and being passed, there is no repassing, no going back from this life to death again.

This new birth is the same that St. John calls the *first resurrection*, and he pronounces them blessed who partake of it: *Blessed are they that have part in the first resurrection; the second death shall have no power over them.* Rev, xx. 6.

The weak beginnings of grace, weak in comparison of the further strength attainable even in this life, are sometimes expressed as the infancy of it; and so believers ought not to continue infants; if they do, it is reprovable in them, as we see, Eph. iv. 14, 1 Cor. ii. 2, and xiv. 20, Heb. v. 12. Though the apostle writes to new converts, and so may possibly imply the tenderness of their beginnings of grace, yet I conceive that infancy is here to be taken in such a sense as agrees to a Christian in the whole course and best estate of his spiritual life here below. So, likewise, the *milk* here recommended is answerable to infancy, taken in this sense, and not in the former (as it is in some of those cited places, where it means the easiest and first principles of religion, and so is opposed to the higher mysteries of it, as to strong meat); but here it signifies the whole word of God, and all its wholesome and saving truths, as the proper nourishment of the children of God. And so the apostle's words are a standing exhortation for all Christians of all degrees.

And the whole estate and course of their spiritual life here is called their *infancy*, not only as opposed to the corruption and wickedness of the old man, but likewise as signifying the weakness and imperfection of it, at its best in this life, compared with the perfection of the life to come; for the weakest beginnings of grace are by no means so far below the highest degree of it possible in this life, as that highest degree falls short of the state of glory; so that, if one measure of grace is called infancy in respect of another, much more is all grace infancy in respect of glory. And surely, as for duration, the time of our present life is far less compared to eternity, than the time of our natural infancy is to the rest of our life; so that we may be still called but *new* or *lately born*. Our best pace and strongest walking in obedience here, is but as the stepping of children when they begin to go by hold, in comparison of the perfect obedience in glory, when *we shall follow the Lamb wheresoever he goes.* All our knowledge here is but as the ignorance of infants, and all our expressions of God and

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of his praises but as the first stammerings of children, in comparison of the knowledge we shall have of him hereafter, when *we shall know as we are known*, and of the praises we shall then offer him, when that new song shall be taught us. A child hath in it a reasonable soul, and yet, by the indisposedness of the body, and abundance of moisture, it is so bound up, that its difference from the beasts in partaking of a rational life is not so apparent as afterward; and thus the spiritual life is that from above infused into a Christian, though it doth act and work in some degree, yet it is so clogged with the natural corruption still remaining in him, that the excellency of it is much clouded and obscured; but in the life to come, it shall have nothing at all incumbering and indisposing it. And this is the Apostle St. Paul's doctrine, 1 Cor. xiii. 9–12.

And this is the wonder of divine grace, that brings so small beginnings to that height of perfection that we are not able to conceive of; that a little spark of true grace, which is not only indiscernible to others, but often to the Christian himself, should yet be the beginning of that condition wherein they shall shine brighter than the sun in the firmament. The difference is great in our natural life, in some persons especially; that they who in infancy were so feeble, and wrapped up as others in swaddling clothes, yet afterward come to excel in wisdom and in the knowledge of sciences, or to be commanders of great armies, or to be kings; but the distance is far greater and more admirable between the weakness of these *newborn babes*, the small beginnings of grace, and our after-perfection, that fulness of knowledge that we look for, and that crown of immortality which all they are born to who are born of God.

But as in the faces or actions of children, characters and presages of their after-greatness have appeared (as a singular beauty in Moses's face, as they write of him, and as Cyrus was made king among the shepherd's children with whom he was brought up, &c.), so also, certainly, in these children of God, there be some characters and evidences that they are born for heaven by their new birth. That holiness and meekness, that patience and faith, which shine in the actions and sufferings of the saints, are characters of their father's image, and show their high original, and foretell their glory to come: such a glory as doth not only surpass the world's thoughts, but the thoughts of the children of God themselves. 1 John iii. 2.

Now that the children of God may grow by the word of God, the apostle requires these two things of them: 1. The innocency of children; 2. The appetite of children. For this expression, as I conceive, is relative not only to the desiring of *the milk of the word*, ver. 2, but to the former verse, the *putting off malice*. So, the Apostle Paul exhorts, 1 Cor. xiv. 20, *As concerning malice, be ye children.*

*Wherefore laying aside.*] This imports that we are naturally prepossessed with these evils, and therefore we are exhorted to put them off. Our hearts are by nature no other than cages of those unclean birds, malice, envy, hypocrisy, &c. The apostle sometimes names some of these evils, and sometimes others of them, but they are inseparable, all one garment, and all comprehended under that one word, Eph. iv. 22, *the old man*, which the apostle there exhorts Christians to put off; and here it is pressed as a necessary evidence of their new birth, as well as for the furtherance of their spiritual growth, that these base habits be thrown away: ragged, filthy habits, unbeseeming the children of God. They are the proper marks of an unrenewed mind, the very characters of the children of Satan, for they constitute his image. He hath his names from enmity, and envy, and slandering; and he is that grand hypocrite and deceiver, who can *transform himself into an angel of light*. 2 Cor. xi. 14.

So, on the contrary, the Spirit of God that dwells in his children is the spirit of meekness, and love, and truth. That dovelike spirit which descended on our Savior, is from him communicated to believers. It is the grossest impudence to pretend to be Christians, and yet to entertain hatred and envyings upon whatsoever occasion; for there is nothing more frequently recommended to them by our Savior's own doctrine, nothing more impressed upon their hearts by his Spirit, than love. Κακία may be taken generally, but I conceive it intends that which we particularly call *malice*.

Malice and envy are but two branches growing ont of the same bitter root; self-love and evil speakings are the fruit they bear. Malice is properly the procuring or wishing another's evil—envy the repining at his good; and both these vent themselves by evil speaking. This infernal fire within smokes and flashes out by the tongue, which, St. James says, *is set on fire of hell* (iii. 6), and fires all about it; censuring the actions of those they hate or envy, aggravating their failings, and detracting from their virtues, taking all things by the left ear; for (as Epictetus says) *everything hath two handles*. The art of taking things by the better side, which charity always doth, would save much of those janglings and heart-burnings that so abound in the world. But folly and perverseness possess the hearts of the most, and therefore their discourses are usually the vent of these; *For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth must speak*. Matt. xii. 34. The unsavory breaths of men argue their inward corruption. Where shall a man come, almost, in societies, but his ears shall be beaten with the unpleasant noise (surely it is so to a Christian mind) of one detracting and disparaging another? And yet this is extreme

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baseness, and the practice only of false counterfeit goodness, to make up one's own reputation out of the ruins of the good name of others. Real virtue neither needs nor can endure this dishonest shift; it can subsist of itself, and therefore ingenuously commends and acknowledges what good exists in others, and loves to hear it acknowledged; and neither readily speaks nor hears evil of any, but rather, where duty and conscience require not discovery, casts a veil upon men's failings to hide them: this is the true temper of the children of God.

These evils of *malice*, and *envy*, and *evil speakings*, and such like, are not to be dissembled by us, in ourselves, and conveyed under better appearances, but to be cast away; not to be covered, but put off; and therefore that which is the upper garment and cloak of all other evils, the apostle here commands us to cast that off too, namely, *hypocrisy*.

What avails it to wear this mask? A man may indeed in the sight of men act his part handsomely under it, and pass so for a time; but know we not that there is an eye that sees through it, and a hand that, if we will not put off this mask, will pull it off to our shame, either here in the sight of men, or, if we should escape all our life, and go fair off the stage under it, yet that there is a day appointed wherein all hypocrites shall be unveiled, and appear what they are indeed before men and angels? It is a poor thing to be approved and applauded by men, while God condemns, to whose sentence all men must stand or fall. Oh! seek to be approved and justified by him, and then *who shall condemn?* Rom. viii. 34. It is no matter who do. How easily may we bear the mistakes and dislikes of all the world, if he declare himself well pleased with us! *It is a small thing for me to be judged of man, or man's day: he that judgeth me is the Lord*, saith the apostle, 1 Cor. iv. 3.

But these evils are here particularly to be put off, as contrary to the right and profitable receiving of the word of God; for this part of the exhortation (*laying aside*) looks to that which follows (*desire, &c.*), and is specially so to be considered.

There is this double task in religion: when a man enters upon it, he is not only to be taught true wisdom, but he is withal, yea, first of all, to be untaught the errors and wickedness that are deep-rooted in his mind, which he hath not only learned by the corrupt conversation of the world, but brought the seeds of them into the world with him. They do indeed improve and grow by the favor of that example that is round about a man, but they are originally in our nature as it is now; they are connatural to us, besides being strengthened by continual custom, which is another nature. There is no one comes to the school of Christ suiting the philosopher's word, *ut tabula rasa*, as blank paper to receive his doctrine; but, on the contrary, all scribbled and blurred with such base habits as these, *malice, hypocrisy, envy*, &c.

Therefore, the first work is, to raze out these, to cleanse and purify the heart from these blots, these foul characters, that it may receive the impression of the image of God. And because it is the word of God that both begins and advances this work, and perfects the lineaments of that divine image on the soul, therefore, to the receiving of this word aright, and to this proper effect by means of it, the conforming of the soul to Jesus Christ, which is the true growth of the spiritual life, this is pre-required, that the hearts of those who hear it be purged of these and such like impurities.

These dispositions are so opposite to the profitable receiving of the word of God, that while they possess and rule the soul, it can not at all embrace these divine truths; while it is filled with such guests, there is no room to entertain the word.

They can not dwell together, by reason of their contrary nature: the word will not mix with these. The saving mixture of the word of God in the soul is what the apostle speaks of, and he assigns the want of it as the cause of unprofitable hearing of the word, Heb. iv. 2, *not mixing of it with faith*. For by that the word is concocted into the nourishment of the life of grace, united to the soul, and mixed with it, by being mixed with faith, as the apostle's expression imports: that is the proper mixture it requires. But with the qualities here mentioned it will not mix; there is a natural antipathy betwixt them, as strong as in those things in nature, that can not be brought by any means to agree and mingle together.

Can there be anything more contrary than the *good word of God*, as the apostle call it, and those *evil speakings?* than the word that is of such excellent sweetness and the bitter words of a malignant tongue? than the word of life and words *full of deadly poison?* For so slanders and defamings of our brethren are termed. And is not all *malice* and *envy* most opposite to the word, that is the message of *peace* and *love?* How can the gall of *malice* and this *milk* of the word agree? Hypocrisy and guile stand in direct opposition to the name of this word, which is called the *word of truth;* and here the very words show this contrariety, *sincere milk*, and a *double, unsincere mind*.

These two are necessary conditions of good nourishment: 1*st*, That the food be good and wholesome; 2*dly*, That the inward constitution of them who use it be so too. And if this fail, the other profits not. This sincere milk is the only proper nourishment of spiritual life, and there is no defect or undue quality in it; but the greatest part of hearers are inwardly unwholesome, diseased with the evils here mentioned, and others of the like nature; and therefore, either have no kind of appetite to the word at all, but rather feed upon such

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trash as suits with their distemper (as some kind of diseases incline those that have them to eat coals or lime, &c.), or, if they be anywise desirous to hear the word, and seem to feed on it, yet the noxious humors that abound in them, make it altogether unprofitable, and they are not nourished by it. This evil of malice and envying, so ordinary among men (and, which is most strange, among Christians), like an overflowing of the gall, possesses their whole minds: so that they not only fail of being nourished by the word they hear, but are made the worse by it; their disease is fed by it, as an unwholesome stomach turns the best meat it receives into that humor that abounds in it. Do not they thus, who observe what the word says, that they may be the better enabled to discover the failings of others, and speak maliciously and uncharitably of them, and vent themselves, as is too common? *This word met well with such a one's fault, and this with another's:*— Is not this to feed these diseases of *malice, envy*, and *evil speakings*, with this *pure milk*, and make *them* grow, instead of growing by it ourselves in grace and holiness?

Thus, likewise, the hypocrite turns all that he hears of this word, not to the inward renovation of his mind, and redressing what is amiss there, but only to the composing of his outward carriage, and to enable himself to act his part better: to be cunninger in his own faculty, a more refined and expert hypocrite; not to grow more a Chirstian indeed, but more such in appearance only, and in the opinion of others.

Therefore it is a very needful advertisement, seeing these evils are so natural to men, and so contrary to the nature of the word of God, that they be purged out, to the end it may be profitably received. A very like exhortation to this hath the apostle St. James, and some of the same words, but in another metaphor: Jam. i. 21, *Wherefore lay apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word.* He compares the word to a plant of excellent virtue, the very tree of life, the word that is able to save your souls; but the only soil wherein it will grow is a heart full of meekness, a heart that is purged of those luxuriant weeds that grow so rank in it by nature; they must be plucked up and thrown out to make place for this word.

And there is such a necessity for this, that the most approved teachers of wisdom, in a human way, have required of their scholars that, to the end their minds might be capable of it, they should be purified from vice and wickedness. For this reason, the philosopher judges young men unfit hearers of moral philosophy, because of the abounding and untamedness of their passions, granting that, if those were composed and ordered, they might be admitted. And it was Socrates' custom, when any one asked him a question, seeking to be informed by him, before he would answer them, he asked them concerning their own qualities and course of life.

Now, if men require a calm and purified disposition of mind to make it capable of *their* doctrine, how much more is it suitable and necessary for learning the doctrine of God, and those deep mysteries that his word opens up! It is well expressed in that apocryphal book of Wisdom, that *Froward thoughts separate from God, and wisdom enters not into a malicious soul:* no, indeed, that is a very unfit dwelling for it; and even a heathen (Seneca) could say, *The mind that is impure is not capable of God and divine things.* Therefore we see the strain of that book of Proverbs that speaks so much of this wisdom; it requires, in the first chapter, that they who would hear it do retire themselves from all ungodly customs and practices. And, indeed, how can the soul apprehend spiritual things, that is not in some measure refined from the love of sin, which abuses and bemires the minds of men, and makes them unable to arise to heavenly thoughts? *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall shall see God*, says our Savior (Matt. v. 8): not only shall see him perfectly hereafter, but so far as they can receive him, he will impart and make himself known unto them here. *If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* (John xiv. 23.) What makes the word obscure is the filthy mists within; whereas, on the contrary, he will in just judgment hide himself, and the saving truth of his word, from those that entertain and delight in sin: the very sins wherein they delight shall obscure and darken the light of the gospel to them, so that though it shine clear as the sun at noonday, they shall be as those that live in a dungeon, they shall not discern it.

And as they receive no benefit by the word, who have the evils here mentioned reigning and in full strength within them, so they that are indeed born again, the more they retain of these the less shall they find the influence and profit of the word; for this exhortation concerns them. They may possibly some of them have a great remainder of these corruptions unmortified; therefore are they exhorted to lay aside entirely those evils, *all malice, all hypocrisy*, &c., else, though they hear the word often, yet they will be in a spiritual atrophy; they will eat much, but grow nothing by it; they will find no increase of grace and spiritual strength.

Would we know the main cause of our fruitless hearing of the word, here it is: men bring not meek and guileless spirits to it, not minds emptied and purified to receive it, but stuffed with *malice*, and *hypocrisy*, and *pride*, and other such evils; and where should the word enter, when all is so taken up? And if it did enter, how should it prosper among so many enemies, or at all abide among them? Either they will turn it out

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again, or choke and kill the power of it. We think religion and our own lusts and secret heart-idols should agree together, because we would have it so; but this is not possible. Therefore labor to entertain the word of truth in the love of it, and lodge the mystery of faith *in a pure conscience*, as the Apostle St. Paul speaks (I Tim. iii. 9). Join those together with David (Psal. cxix. 113), *I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love.* And as here our apostle, *Lay aside all malice, and hypocrisy, and envy, and evil speakings*, and so receive the word, or else look for no benefit by it here, nor for salvation by it hereafter; but be prevailed upon to cast out all impurity, and give your whole heart to it; so desire it, that *you may grow*, and then, as you desire, *you shall grow by it.*

Every real believer hath received a life from heaven, far more excelling our natural life than that excels the life of the beasts. And this life hath its own peculiar desires and delights, which are the proper actings, and the certain characters and evidence of it: among others this is one, and a main one, answerable to the like desire in natural life, namely, a desire of food; and because it is here still imperfect, therefore the natural end of this is not only nourishment, but growth, as it is here expressed.

*The sincere milk of the word.*] The life of grace is the proper life of a reasonable soul, and without it, the soul is dead, as the body is without the soul; so that this may be truly rendered *reasonable milk*, as some read it; but certainly, that reasonable milk is the word of God, *the milk of the word.*

It was before called *the immortal seed*, and here it is *the milk* of those that are born again, and thus it is nourishment very agreeable to that spiritual life according to their saying, *Iisdem alimur ex quibus constamus*, we are nourished by that of which we consist. As the milk that infants draw from the breast, is the most connatural food to them, being of that same substance that nourished them in the womb; so, when they are brought forth, that food follows them as it were for their supply, in the way that is provided in nature for it; by certain veins it ascends into the breasts, and is there fitted for them, and they are by nature directed to find it there. Thus, as a Christian begins to live by the power of the word, so he is by the nature of that spiritual life directed to that same word as its nourishment. To follow the resemblance further in the qualities of milk, after the monkish way, that runs itself out of breath in allegory, I conceive is neither solid nor profitable; and to speak freely, the curious searching of the similitude in other qualities of milk seems to wrong the quality here given it by the apostle, in which it is so well resembled by milk, namely, the simple pureness and sincerity of the word; besides that the pressing of comparisons of this kind too far, proves often so constrained ere they have done with it, that by too much drawing they bring forth blood instead of milk.

*Pure and unmixed*, as milk drawn immediately from the breast; the pure word of God without the mixture, not only of error, but of all other composition of vain unprofitable subtleties, or affected human eloquence, such as become not the majesty and gravity of God's word. *If any man speak*, says our apostle (chap. iv. 11), *let him speak as the oracles of God.* Light conceits and flowers of rhetoric wrong the word more than they can please the hearers; the weeds among the corn make it look gay, but it were all the better they were not among it. Nor can those mixtures be pleasing to any but carnal minds. They who are indeed the children of God, as infants who like their breast-milk best pure, do love the word best so, and whersoever they find it so, they relish it well; whereas natural men can not love spiritual things for themselves, desire not the word for its own sweetness, but would have it sauced with such conceits as possibly spoil the simplicity of it; or at the best, love to hear it for the wit and learning which, without any wrongful mixture of it, they find in one person's delivering it more than another's. But the natural and genuine appetite of the children of God is to the word for itself, and only as milk, *sincere milk;* and where they find it so, from whomsoever or in what way soever delivered unto them, they feed upon it with delight. Before conversion, wit or eloquence may draw a man to the word, and possibly prove a happy bait to catch him (as St. Augustine reports of his hearing St. Ambrose), but when once he is born again, then it is the milk itself that he desires for itself.

*Desire the sincere milk.*] Not only hear it because it is your custom, but desire it because it is your food. And it is, 1. A *natural* desire as the infant's desire of milk; not upon any external respect or inducement, but from an inward principle and bent of nature. And because natural, therefore, 2. *Earnest;* not a cold indifferent willing, that cares not whether it obtain or not, but a vehement desire, as the word signifies, and as the resemblance clearly bears; as a child that will not be stilled till it have the breast; offer it what you will, silver, gold, or jewels, it regards them not, these answer not its desire, and that must be answered. Thus David (Psal. cxix. 20), *My soul breaketh for the longing it hath to thy judgments;* as a child like to break its heart with crying for want of the breast. And again, because natural, it is, 3. *Constant.* The infant is not cloyed nor wearied with daily feeding on the breast, but desires it every day, as if it had never had it before: so the child of God hath an unchangeable appetite for the word; it is daily new to him; he finds still fresh delight in it. Thus David, as before cited, *My soul break-*



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*eth for the longing it hath for thy judgments at all times.* And then, Psal. i., this law was his *meditation day and night.* Whereas, a natural man is easily surfeited of it, and the very commonness and cheapness of it makes it contemptible to him. And this is our case; that wherein we should wonder at God's singular goodness to us, and therefore prize his word the more, that very thing makes us despise it: while others, our brethren, have bought this milk with their own blood, we have it upon the easiest terms that can be wished, only for the desiring, without the hazard of bleeding for it, and scarcely need we be at the pains of sweating for it.

*That ye may grow thereby.*] This is not only the end for which God hath provided his children with the word, and moves them to desire it, but that which they are to intend in their desire and use of it; and, answerable to God's purpose, they are therefore to desire it, because it is proper for this end, and that by it they may attain this end, *to grow thereby.* And herein, indeed, these children differ from infants in the natural life, who are directed to their food beside their knowledge, and without intention of its end; but this *rational milk* is to be desired by the children of God in a rational way, knowing and intending its end, having the use of natural reason renewed and sanctified by supernatural grace.

Now the end of this desire is, growth. Desire the word, not that you may only hear it; that is to fall very far short of its true end; yea, it is to take the beginning of the work for the end of it. The ear is indeed the mouth of the mind, by which it receives the word (as Elihu compares it, Job xxxiv. 2), but meat that goes no further than the mouth, you know can not nourish. Neither ought this desire of the word to be, only to satisfy a custom; it were an exceeding folly to make so superficial a thing the end of so serious a work. Again, to hear it only to stop the mouth of conscience, that it may not clamor more for the gross impiety of contemning it, this is to hear it, not out of desire, but out of fear. To desire it only for some present pleasure and delight that a man may find in it, is not the due use and end of it: that there is delight in it, may help to commend it to those that find it so, and so be a mean to advance the end; but the end it is not. To seek no more than a present delight, that evanisheth with the sound of the words that die in the air, is not to desire the word as meat, but as music, as God tells the prophet Ezekiel of his people, Ezek. xxxiii. 32: *And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument; for they hear thy words, and they do them not.* To desire the word for the increase of knowledge, although this is necessary and commendable, and, being rightly qualified, is a part of spiritual accretion, yet, taking it as going no further, it is not the true end of the word. Nor is the vesting of that knowledge in speech and frequent discourse of the word and the divine truths that are in it; which, where it is governed with Christian prudence, is not to be despised, but commended; yet, certainly, the highest knowledge, and the most frequent and skilful speaking of the word, severed from the growth here mentioned, misses the true end of the word. If any one's head or tongue should grow apace, and all the rest stand at a stay, it would certainly make him a monster; and they are no other, who are knowing and discoursing Christians, and grow daily in that respect, but not at all in holiness of heart and life, which is the proper growth of the children of God. Apposite to their case is Epictetus's comparison of the sheep; they return not what they eat in grass, but in wool. David, in that cxixth psalm, which is wholly spent upon this subject, the excellency and use of the word of God, expresseth, ver. 15, 16, 24, his delight in it, his earnest desire to be further taught, and to know more of it; his readiness to speak of it, ver. 13, 27; but withal, you know, he joins his desire and care *to keep it, to hide it in his heart,* &c., ver. 5, 11; to make it *the man of his counsel,* to let it be as the whole assembly of his privy counsellors, and to be ruled and guided by it; and, with him, to use it so, is indeed to grow by it.

If we know what this spiritual life is, and wherein the nature of it consists, we may easily know what is the growth of it. When holiness increases, when the sanctifying graces of the Spirit grow stronger in the soul, and consequently act more strongly in the life of a Christian, then he grows spiritually.

And as the word is the mean of begetting this spiritual life, so likewise of its increase.

1. This will appear, if we consider the nature of the word in general, that it is spiritual and Divine, treats of the highest things, and therefore hath in it a fitness to elevate men's minds from the earth, and to assimilate to itself such as are often conversant with it; as all kind of doctrine readily doth to those who are much in it, and apply their minds to study it. Doubtless such kind of things as are frequent with men, have an influence into the disposition of their souls. The gospel is called *light,* and the children of God are likewise called *light,* as being transformed into its nature; and thus they become still the more, by more hearing of it, and so they grow.

2. If we look more particularly unto the strain and tenor of the word, it will appear most fit for increasing the graces of the Spirit in a Christian; for there be in it particular truths relative to them, that are apt to excite them, and set them on work, and so to make them grow, as all habits do, by acting. It doth (as the apostle's word may be translated) *stir up the sparks,* and blow them into a great

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er flame, make them burn clearer and hotter. This it doth both by particular exhortation to the study and exercise of those graces, sometimes pressing one, and sometimes another: and by right representing to them their objects. The word feeds *faith*, by setting before it the free grace of God, his rich promises, and his power and truth to perform them all; shows it the strength of the new covenant, not depending upon itself, but holding in Christ, in whom all the promises of God are *yea* and *amen;* and drawing faith still to rest more entirely upon his righteousness. It feeds *repentance*, by making the vileness and deformity of sin daily more clear and visible. Still as more of the word hath admission into the soul, the more it hates sin, sin being the more discovered and the better known in its own native color: as the more light there is in a house, the more anything that is uncleanly or deformed is seen and disliked. Likewise it increaseth *love to God*, by opening up still more and more of his infinite excellency and loveliness. As it borrows the resemblance of the vilest things in nature, to express the foulness and hatefulness of sin, so all the beauties and dignities that are in all the creatures are called together in the word, to give us some small scantling of that Uncreated Beauty that alone deserves to be loved. Thus might its fitness be instanced in respect to all other graces.

But above all other considerations, this is observable in the word as the increaser of grace, that it holds forth Jesus Christ to our view to look upon, not only as the perfect pattern, but as the full fountain of all grace, from *whose fulness we all receive*. The contemplating of him as the perfect image of God, and then drawing from him as having in himself a treasure for us, these give the soul more of that image in which consists truly spiritual growth. This the apostle expresseth excellently, 2 Cor. iii. *ult.*, speaking of the ministry of the gospel revealing Christ, that *beholding in him* (as it is, ch. iv. 6, *in his face*) *the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord:* not only that we may take the copy of his graces, but have a share of them.

There may be many things that might be said of this spiritual growth, but I will add only a few.

First, on the one hand, in the judging of his growth, some persons conclude too rigidly against themselves, that they grow not by the word, because their growth is not so sensible to them as they desire. But, 1. It is well known, that in all things that grow, this principle is not discerned in *motu sed in termino*, not in the growing, but when they are grown. 2. Besides, other things are to be considered in this: although other graces seem not to advance, yet if thou growest more self-denying and humble in the sense of thy slowness, all is not lost; although the branches shoot not up so fast as thou wishest, yet, if the root grow deeper, and fasten more, it is a useful growth. He that is still learning to be more in Jesus Christ, and less in himself, to have all his dependance and comfort in him, is doubtless a growing believer.

On the other side, a far greater number conclude wrong in their own favor, imagining that they do grow, if they gain ground in some of those things we mentioned above: namely, more knowledge and more faculty of discoursing, if they find often some present stirrings of joy or sorrow in hearing of the word, if they reform their life, grow more civil and blameless, &c.; yet all these, and many such things, may be in a natural man, who notwithstanding grows not, for that is impossible; he is not, in that state, a subject capable of this growth, for he is dead, he hath none of the new life to which this growth relates. *Herod heard gladly, and obeyed many things*, Mark vi. 20.

Consider, then, what true delight we might have in this. You find a pleasure when you see your children grow, when they begin to stand and walk, and so forth; you love well to perceive your estate or your honor grow: but for the soul to be growing liker God, and nearer heaven, if we know it, is a pleasure far beyond them all: to find pride, earthliness, and vanity abating, and faith, love, and spiritual-mindedness increasing; especially if we reflect that this growth is not as our natural life, which is often cut off before it has attained full age, as we call it, and, if it attain that, falls again to move downward, and decays, as the sun, being at its meridian, begins to decline again; but this life shall grow on in whomsever it is, and come certainly to its fulness; after which, there is no more need of this word, either for growth or nourishment—no death, no decay, no old age, but perpetual youth, and a perpetual spring; *ver æternum, fulness of joy in the presence of God, and everlasting pleasures at his right hand.*

VER 3. If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

OUR natural desire of food arises principally from its necessity for that end which nature seeks, *viz.*, the growth, or at least the nourishment of our bodies. But there is besides, a present sweetness and pleasantness in the use of it, that serves to sharpen our desire, and is placed in our nature for that purpose. Thus the children of God, in their spiritual life, are naturally carried to desire the means of their nourishment and of their growth, being always here in a growing state; but withal there is a spiritual delight and sweetness in the word, in that which it reveals concerning God, and this adds to their desire, stirs up their appetite toward it. The former idea is expressed in the foregoing verse, the latter in this. Nature disposes the infant to the breast; but when it hath one

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tasted of it, that is a new superadded attractive, and makes it desire after it the more earnestly. So here,

The word is fully recommended to us by these two, usefulness and pleasantness: like milk (as it is compared here), which is a nourishing food, and withal sweet and delightful to the taste: *by* it we grow, and *in it* we taste the graciousness of God. David, in that psalm which he dedicates wholly to this subject, gives both these as the reason of his appetite. His love to it he expresses pathetically (cxix. 97), *O how love I thy law!* It follows, that by it he was *made wiser than his enemies—than his teachers*—and *than the ancients;* taught to *refrain from every evil way* (ver. 102); taught by the Author of that word, the Lord himself, to grow wiser and warier, and holier in the divine ways; and then, ver. 103, he adds this other reason, *How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth.*

We shall speak, I. Of the goodness or graciousness of the Lord; II. Of this taste; and III. Of the inference from both.

I. The goodness of God: *The Lord is gracious;* or, of a bountiful, kind disposition. The Hebrew word in Psal. xxxiv. 8, whence this is taken, signifies *good*. The Septuagint render it by the same word as is used here by our apostle. Both the words signify a benignity and kindness of nature. It is given as one of love's attributes, 1 Cor. xiii. 4, that it is *kind* χρηστευεται, ever compassionate, and helpful as it can be in straits and distresses, still ready to forget and pass by evil, and to do good. In the largest and most comprehensive sense must we take the expression here, and yet still we shall speak and think infinitely below what his goodness is. He is naturally good, yea, goodness is his nature; he is goodness and love itself. *He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love,* 1 John iv. 8. He is primitively good; all goodness is derived from him, and all that is in the creature comes forth from no other than that ocean; and his graciousness is still larger than them all.

There is a common bounty of God, wherein he doth good to all, and so *the whole earth is full of his goodness*, Psal. xxxiii. 5. But the goodness that the gospel is full of—the particular stream that runs in that channel, is his peculiar graciousness and love to his own children, that by which they are first enlivened, and then refreshed and sustained in their spiritual being. It is this that is here spoken of. He is gracious to them in freely forgiving their sins, in giving no less than himself unto them; he frees them from all evils, and fills them with all good. He *satisfies thy mouth with good things*, Psal. ciii. 3–5: and so it follows with good reason, ver. 8, that he is *merciful and gracious;* and his graciousness is there further expressed in his gentleness and *slowness to anger*, his bearing with the frailties of his own, and pitying them *as a father pitieth his children*, verse 13.

No friend is so kind and friendly (as this word signifies), and none so powerful. He is *a present help in trouble*, ready to be found: whereas others may be far off, he is always at hand, and his presence is always comfortable.

They that know God, still find him a real, useful good. Some things and some persons are useful at one time, and others at another, but God at all times. A well-furnished table may please a man while he hath health and appetite, but offer it to him in the height of a fever, how unpleasant would it be then! Though ever so richly decked, it is then not only useless, but hateful to him: but the kindness and love of God is then as seasonable and refreshing to him, as in health, and possibly more; he can find sweetness in that, even on his sick bed. The choler abounding in the mouth, in a fever, doth not disrelish this sweetness; it transcends and goes above it. Thus all earthly enjoyments have but some time (as meats) when they are in season, but the graciousness of God is always sweet; the taste of that is never out of season. See how old age spoils the relish of outward delights, in the example of Barzillai, 2 Sam. xix. 35; but it makes not this distasteful. Therefore the psalmist prays, that when other comforts forsake him and wear out, when they ebb from him and leave him on the sand, this may not; that still he may feed on the goodness of God: Psal. lxxi. 9. *Cast me not off in old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth.* It is the continual influence of his graciousness that makes them still grow like *cedars in Lebanon*, Psal. xcii. 14, 15, that makes them *bring forth fruit in old age, and to be still fat and flourishing; to show that the Lord is upright*, as it is there added, that he is (as the word imports) *still like himself*, and his goodness ever the same.

Full chests or large possessions may seem sweet to a man, till death present itself; but then (as the prophet speaks of *throwing away their idols of silver and gold to the bats and moles, in the day of calamity*, Isa. ii. 20)—then, he is forced to throw away all he possesses, with disdain of it and of his former folly in doating on it—then, the kindness of friends, and wife, and children can do nothing but increase his grief and their own—but then is the love of God the good indeed and abiding sweetness, and it best relisheth when all other things are most unsavory and uncomfortable.

God is gracious, but it is God in Christ; otherwise we can not find him so; therefore this is here spoken in particular of Jesus Christ (as it appears by that which followeth), through whom all the peculiar kindness and love of God is conveyed to the soul, for it can come no other way; and the word here mentioned is the gospel (See ch. i. ver. *ult.*), where-

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*of* Christ is the subject. Though God is mercy and goodness in himself, yet we can not find or apprehend him so to us, but as we are looking through that *medium*, the Mediator. That main point of the goodness of God in the gospel, which is so sweet to an humbled sinner, the forgiveness of sins, we know we can not taste of, but in Christ, *In whom we have redemption*, Eph. i. 7. And all the favor that shines on us, all the grace we receive, is *of his fulness;* all our acceptance with God, our being taken into grace and kindness again, is in him. *He made us accepted in the beloved* (ver. 6). His grace appears in both, as it is there expressed, but it is all in Christ. Let us therefore never leave him out in our desires of tasting the graciousness and love of God: for otherwise, we shall but dishonor him, and disappoint ourselves.

The free grace of God was given to be tasted, in the promises, before the coming of Christ in the flesh; but being accomplished in his coming, then was the sweetness of grace made more sensible; then was it more fully broached, and let out to the elect world, when he was pierced on the cross, and his blood poured out for our redemption. *Through those holes of his wounds may we draw, and taste that the Lord is gracious*, says St. Augustine.

II. As to this taste: *Ye have tasted.*] There is a tasting exercised by temporary believers, spoken of Heb. vi. 4. There highest sense of spiritual things (and it will be in some far higher than we easily think), yet is but a taste, and is called so in comparison of the truer, fuller sense that true believers have of the grace and goodness of God, which, compared with a temporary taste, is more than tasting. The former is merely tasting; rather an imaginary taste than real; but this is a true feeding on the graciousness of God, yet it is called but a taste in respect of the fulness to come. Though it is more than a taste, as distinguishable from the hypocrite's sense, yet it is no more than a taste, compared with the great marriage-feast we look for.

Jesus Christ being *all in all* unto the soul, faith apprehending him, is all the spiritual sense. Faith is the eye that beholds his matchless beauty, and so kindles love in the soul, and can speak of him as having seen him and taken particular notice of him, Cant. v. 9. It is the ear that discerns his voice, Cant. ii. 8. It is faith that smells *his name poured forth as an ointment;* faith that touches him, and draws virtue from him; and faith that tastes him, Cant. ii. 3: and so here, *If ye have tasted.*

In order to this there must be, 1. A firm believing of the truth of the promises, wherein the free grace of God is expressed and exhibited to us. 2. A particular application or attraction of that grace to ourselves, which is the dawning of those *breasts of consolation*, Isa. lxvi. 11, namely, the promises contained in the Old and New Testaments. 3. A sense of the sweetness of that grace, being applied or drawn into the soul, and that constitutes properly this taste. No unrenewed man hath any of these in truth, not the highest kind of temporary believer; he can not have so much as a real lively assent to the general truth of the promises: for had he that, the rest would follow. But as he can not have the least of these in truth, he may have the counterfeit of them all; not only of assent but of application: yea, and a false spiritual joy arising from it; and all these so drawn to the life, that they may resemble much of the reality; to give clear characters of difference is not so easy as most persons imagine; but doubtless, the true living faith of a Christian hath in itself such a particular stamp, as brings with it its own evidence, when the soul is clear and the light of God's face shines upon it. Indeed, in the dark we can not read, nor distinguish one mark from another; but when a Christian hath light to look upon the work of God in his own soul, although he can not make another sensible of that by which he knows it, yet he himself is ascertained, and can say confidently in himself, "This I know, that this faith and taste of God I have is true: the seal of the spirit of God is upon it;" and this is the reading of that *new name in the white stone, which no man knows but he that hath it*, Rev. ii. 17. There is, in a true believer, such a constant love to God for himself, and such a continual desire after him simply for his own excellency and goodness, as no other can have. On the other side, would a hypocrite deal truly and impartially by himself he would readily find out something that would discover him, more or less, to himself. But the truth is, men are willing to deceive themselves, and thence arises the difficulty. One man can not make another sensible of the sweetness of divine grace: he may speak to him of it very excellently, but all he says in that kind, is an unknown language to a natural man; he heareth many good words, but he can not tell what they mean. *The natural man tastes not the things of God, for they are spiritually discerned.* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

A spiritual man himself doth not fully conceive this sweetness that he tastes of; it is an infinite goodness, and he hath but a taste of it. The *peace of God*, which is a main fruit of this his goodness, *passeth all understanding*, says the apostle, Phil. iv. 7: not only all natural understanding (as some modify it), but all understanding, even the supernatural understanding of those who enjoy it. And as the godly man can not conceive it all, so as to that which he conceives, he can not express it all, and that which he doth express, the carnal mind can not conceive of by his expression.

But he that hath indeed tasted of this goodness, O how tasteless are those things to him that the world call sweet! As when you have tasted something that is very sweet, it disrelishes other things after it. Therefore

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can a Christian so easily either want, or use with disregard the delights of this earth. His heart is not upon them: for the delight that he finds in God carrieth it unspeakably away from all the rest, and makes them in comparison seem sapless to his taste.

Solomon tasted of all the delicacies, the choicest dishes that are in such esteem among men, and not only tasted, but ate largely of them, and yet, see how he goes over them, to let us know what they are, and passes from one dish to another. *This also is vanity*, and of the next, *This also is vanity*, and so through all, and of all in general, *All is vanity and vexation of spirit*, or *feeding on the wind*, as the word may be rendered.

III. We come in the third place to the *inference: If ye have tasted*, &c., then *lay aside all malice and guile, and hypocrisies and envies, and all evil speakings*, ver. 1; for it looks back to the whole exhortation. Surely, if you have tasted of that kindness and sweetness of God in Christ, it will compose your spirits, and conform them to him; it will diffuse such a sweetness through your soul, that there will be no place for *malice and guile;* there will be nothing but love, and meekness, and singleness of heart. Therefore, they who have bitter malicious spirits, evidence they have not tasted of the love of God. As the Lord is good, so they who taste of his goodness are made like him. *Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you.* Eph. iv. 32.

Again, if ye have tasted, then desire more. And this will be the truest sign of it: he that is in a continual hunger and thirst after this graciousness of God, has surely tasted of it. *My soul thirsteth for God*, saith David, Psal. xlii. 2. He had tasted before; he remembers, ver. 4, that he *went to the house of God, with the voice of joy.*

This is that happy circle wherein the soul of the believer moves: the more they love it, the more they shall taste of this goodness; and the more they taste, the more they shall still love and desire it.

But observe, *if ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious*, then, *desire the milk of the word.* This is the sweetness of the *word*, that it hath in it the Lord's graciousness gives us the knowledge of his love. This they find in it, who have spiritual life and senses, and those senses exercised to discern good and evil; and this engages a Christian to further desire of the word. They are fantastical deluding tastes, that draw men from the written word, and make them expect other revelations. This graciousness is first conveyed to us by the *word;* there first we taste it, and therefore, there still we are to seek it; to hang upon those breasts that can not be drawn dry; there the love of God, in Christ, streams forth in the several promises. The heart that cleaves to the word of God, and delights in it, can not but find in it, daily, new tastes of his goodness; there it reads his love, and by that stirs up its own to him, and so grows and loves, every day more than the former, and thus is tending from tastes to fulness. It is but little we can receive here, some drops of joy that enter into us; but there we shall enter into joy, as vessels put into a sea of happiness.

VER. 4. To whom, coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious;

VER. 5. Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

THE spring of all the dignities of a Christian, which is therefore the great motive of all his duties, is, his near relation to Jesus Christ. Thence it is, that the apostle makes that the great subject of his doctrine, both to represent to his distressed brethren their dignity in that respect, and to press by it the necessary duties he exhorts unto. Having spoken of their spiritual life and growth in him, under the resemblance of natural life, he prosecutes it here by another comparison very frequent in the scriptures, and therefore makes use in it of some passages of these Scriptures, that were prophetical of Christ and his Church. Though there be here two different similitudes, yet they have so near a relation one to another, and meet so well in the same subject, that he joins them together, and then illustrates them severally in the following verses; a *temple*, and a *priesthood*, comparing the saints to both: The former in these words of this verse.

We have in it, 1. The nature of the building: 2. The materials of it: 3. The structure or way of building it.

1. The *nature* of it is, a *spiritual building.* Time and place, we know, received their being from God, and he was eternally before both: he is therefore styled by the prophet, *The high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity.* Isaiah lvii. 15. But having made the world, he fills it, though not as contained in it, and so, the whole frame of it is his palace or temple, but after a more special manner, the higher and statelier part of it, the highest heaven; therefore it is called his *holy place* and *the habitation of his holiness and glory.* And on earth, the houses of his public worship are called *his houses;* especially the Jewish temple in its time, having in it such a relative typical holiness, which others have not. But besides all these, and beyond them all in excellency, he hath a house wherein he dwells more peculiarly than in any of the rest, even more than in heaven, taken for the place only, and that is this *spiritual building.* And this is most suitable to the nature of God. As our Savior says of the necessary conformity of his worship to himself, *God is a spirit, and therefore will be worshipped in spirit and in truth*, John iv. 24; so it holds of his house; he must have a spiritual one, because he is a spirit; so God's temple is his people.

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And for this purpose chiefly did he make the world, the heaven, and the earth, that in it he might raise this spiritual building for himself to dwell in for ever, to have a number of his reasonable creatures to enjoy him, and glorify him in eternity. And from that eternity he knew what the dimensions, and frame, and materials of it should be. The continuance of this present world, as now it is, is but for the service of this work, like the scaffolding about it; and therefore, when this spiritual building shall be fully completed, all the present frame of things in the world, and in the church itself, shall be taken away and appear no more.

This building is, as the particular designation of its materials will teach us, *the whole invisible church of God*, and each good man is a stone of this building. But as the nature of it is spiritual, it hath this privilege (as they speak of the soul), that it is *tota in toto, et tota in qualibet parte:* the whole Church is the spouse of Christ, and each believing soul hath the same title and dignity to be called so: thus each of these stones is called a whole temple, *temples of the Holy Ghost*, 1 Cor. vi. 19; though, taking the temple or building in a completer sense, they are but each one a part, or a stone of it, as here it is expressed.

The whole excellency of this building is comprised in this, that it is *spiritual*, a term distinguishing it from all other buildings, and preferring it above them. And inasmuch as the apostle speaks immediately after of a priesthood and sacrifices, it seems to be called a *spiritual building*, particularly in opposition to that material temple wherein the Jews gloried, which was now null, in regard of its former use, and was quickly after entirely destroyed. But while it stood, and the legal use of it stood in its fullest vigor, yet, in this respect, still it was inferior, that it was not a *spiritual house*, made up of *living stones*, as this, but of a like matter with other earthly buildings.

This spiritual house is the palace of the Great King, or his temple. The Hebrew word for *palace* and *temple* is one. God's temple is a palace, and therefore must be full of the richest beauty and magnificence, but such as agrees with the nature of it, a spiritual beauty. In that psalm that wishes so many prosperities, one is, that *their daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace*, Psal. cxliv. 12. This is the church: she is called the *king's daughter*, Psal. xlv. 13; but her comeliness is invisible to the world, *she is all glorious within.* Through sorrows and persecutions, she may be smoky and black to the world's eye, as the *tents of Kedar;* but in regard of spiritual beauty, she *is comely as the curtains of Solomon.* And in this the Jewish temple resembles it aright, which had most of its riches and beauty in the inside. Holiness is the gold of this spiritual house, and it is inwardly enriched with that.

The glory of the church of God consists not in stately buildings of temples, and rich furniture, and pompous ceremonies: these agree not with its spiritual nature. Its true and genuine beauty is, to grow in spirituality, and so to be liker itself, and to have more of the presence of God, and his glory filling it as a cloud. And it hath been observed, that the more the church grew in outward riches and state, the less she grew, or rather the more sensibly she abated in spiritual excellences. But the spiritualness of this building will better appear in considering particularly,

*2dly.* The *materials* of it, as here expressed: *To whom coming*, &c., *ye also, as lively stones, are*, &c. Now the whole building is Christ mystical, Christ together with the entire body of the elect: he as the foundation, and they as the stones built upon him; he, the living stone, and they likewise, by union with him, living stones; he, *having life in himself*, as he speaks, John vi., and they deriving it from him; he, primitively living, and they, by participation. For therefore is he called here a *living stone*, not only because of his immortality and glorious resurrection, being *a lamb that was slain, and is alive again for ever*, but because he is the principle of spiritual and eternal life unto us, a living foundation that transfuses this life into the whole building, and every stone of it, *In whom* (says the apostle, Ephes. ii. 21) *all the building is fitly framed together.* It is the spirit that flows from him which enlivens it, and knits it together, as a living body; for the same word συναρμολογούμενον is used, ch. iv. 16, for the church under the similitude of a body. When it is said, ch. ii. 20, *to be built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles*, it only refers to their doctrine concerning Christ; and therefore it is added, that he, as being the subject of their doctrine, is the *chief corner-stone.* The foundation, then, of the church, lies not in *Rome*, but in heaven, and therefore is out of the reach of all enemies, and above the power of *the gates of hell.* Fear not, then, when you see the storms arise, and the winds blow against this spiritual building, for *it shall stand; it is built upon an* invisible, immoveable *rock*, and that great *Babylon*, Rome itself, that, under the false title and pretence of supporting this building, is working to overthrow it, shall be utterly overthrown, and laid equal with the ground, and never be rebuilt again.

But this *foundation-stone*, as it is commended by its quality, that it is a *living* and enlivening stone, having life and giving life to those that are built on it, so it is also further described by God's choosing it, and by its own worth; in both opposed to men's disesteem, and therefore it is said here, to be *chosen of God and precious.* God did in-

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deed from eternity contrive this building, and choose this same foundation, and accordingly, in the fulness of time, did perform his purpose; so the thing being one, we may take it either for his purpose, or the performance of it, or both; yet it seems most suitable to the strain of the words, and to the place after alleged, in respect to *laying him in Sion* in opposition to the rejection of men, that we take it for God's actual employing of Jesus Christ in the work of our redemption. He alone was fit for that work: it was utterly impossible that any other should bear the weight of that service (and so of this building), than he who was almighty. Therefore the spouse calls him *the select*, or *choice of ten thousand*, yet he was *rejected of men*. There is an antipathy (if we may so speak), betwixt the mind of God and corrupt nature; the things that are highly esteemed with men, are abomination to God: and thus we see here, that which is highly esteemed with God, is cast out and *disallowed by men*. But surely there is no comparison; the choosing and esteem of God stands; and by that (judge men of Christ as they will), he is the foundation of this building. And he is in true value answerable to this esteem; he is *precious*, which seems to signify a kind of inward worth, hidden from the eyes of men, blind unbelieving men, but well known to God, and to those to whom he reveals him. And this is the very cause of his rejection by the most, the ignorance of his worth and excellency; as a precious stone that the skilful lapidary esteems of great value, an ignorant beholder makes little or no account of.

These things hold likewise in the other stones of this building; they, too, are *chosen* before time; all that should be of this building, foreordained in God's purpose, all written in that book beforehand, and then, in due time, they are chosen, by actual calling, according to that purpose, hewed out and severed by God's own hand, out of the quarry of corrupt nature; dead stones in themselves, as the rest, but made living by his bringing them to Christ, and so made truly *precious*, and accounted precious by him who hath made them so. All the stones in this building are called *God's jewels*, Mal. iii. 17. Though they be vilified and scoffed at, and despised by men, though they pass for fools and the refuse of the world, yet they may easily digest all that, in the comfort of this, if they are chosen of God, and precious in his eyes. This is the very lot of Christ, and therefore by that the more welcome, that it conforms them to him—suits these stones to their foundation.

And if we consider it aright, what a poor despicable thing is the esteem of men! How soon is it past! *It is a small thing for me*, says the Apostle Paul, *to be judged of men*, 1 Cor. iv. 3. Now that God often chooses for this building such stones as men cast away as good for nothing, see 1 Cor. i. 26. And where he says, Isa. lvii. 15, that he *dwells in the high and holy place*, what is his other dwelling? His habitation on earth, is it in great palaces and courts? No; but *with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit*. Now, these are the basest in men's account; yet *he* chooses them, and prefers them to all other palaces and temples. Isa. lxvi. 1, 2. *Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: Where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.* q. d. You can not gratify me with any dwelling, for I myself have made all, and a surer house than any you can make me; *The heaven is my throne, and the earth my footstool;* but I, who am so high, am pleased to regard the lowly.

3*dly*. We have the *structure*, or way of building. *To whom coming.*] First, *coming*, then, *built up*. They that come unto Christ, come not only from *the world that lieth in wickedness*, but out of themselves. Of a great many that seem to come to Christ, it may be said, that they are not come to him, *because they have not left themselves*. This is believing on him, which is the very resigning of the soul to Christ, and living by him. *Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life*, says Christ, John v. 40. He complains of it as a wrong done to him; but the loss it ours. It is his glory to give us life who were dead; but it is our happiness to receive that life from him. Now these stones come unto their foundation; which imports the moving of the soul to Christ, being moved by his spirit, and that the will acts, and willingly (for it can not act otherwise), but still as being actuated and drawn by the Father: John vi. 65. *No man can come to me except the Father draw him.* And the outward mean of drawing is by the word; it is the sound of that harp that brings the stones of this spiritual building together. And then, being united to Christ, they are built up; that is, as St. Paul expresses it, Ephes. ii. 21, *they grow up unto a holy temple in the Lord.*

In times of peace, the church may dilate more, and build as it were into breadth, but in times of trouble, it arises more in height; it is then built upward: as in cities where men are straightened, they build usually higher than in the country. Notwithstanding the church's afflictions, yet still the building is going forward; it is built, as Daniel speaks of Jerusalem, *in troublous times*. And it is this which the apostle intends, as suiting with his foregoing exhortation: this passage may be read exhortatively, too: but taking it rather as asserting their condition, it is for this end, that they may remember to be like it, and grow up. For this end he expressly calls them *living stones;* an adjunct

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root not usual for stones, but here inseparable: and therefore, though the apostle changes the similitude, from infants to stones, yet he will not let go this quality of living, as making chiefly for his purpose.

To teach us the necessity of growth in believers, they are therefore often compared to things that grow, to *trees* planted in fruitful growing places, as *by the rivers of water;* to *cedars in Lebanon*, where they are tallest; to *the morning light;* to infants on the breast; and here, where the word seems to refuse it, to *stones;* yet (it must, and well doth admit this unwonted epithet) they are called *living* and *growing stones.*

If, then, you would have the comfortable persuasion of this union with Christ, see whether you find your souls established upon Jesus Christ, finding him as your strong foundation; not resting on yourselves, nor on any other thing either within you, or without you, but supported by him alone; drawing life from him, by virtue of that union, as from a living foundation, so as to say with the apostle, *I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* Gal. ii. 20.

As these stones are built on Christ by faith, so they are cemented one to another by love; and, therefore, where that is not, it is but a delusion for persons to think themselves parts of this building. As it is knit to him, it is knit together in itself through him; and if dead stones in a building support and mutually strengthen one another, how much more ought *living stones* in an active, lively way so to do! The stones of this building keep their place: the lower rise not up to be in the place of the higher. As the apostle speaks of the parts of the body, so the stones of this building in humility and love keep their station, and grow up in it, *edifying in love*, saith the apostle, Eph. iv. 16; importing, that the want of this much prejudices edification.

These stones, because they are living, therefore grow in the life of grace and spiritualness, being a *spiritual building;* so that if we find not this, but our hearts are still carnal, and glued to the earth, *minding earthly things*, wiser in those than in spirituals, this evidences strongly against us, that we are not of this building. How few of us have that spiritualness that becomes the temples of the Holy Ghost, or the stones of that building! Base lusts are still lodging and ruling within us, and so our hearts are as cages of unclean birds and filthy spirits.

Consider this as your happiness, to form part of this building, and consider the unsolidness of other comforts and privileges. If some have called those stones happy, that were taken for the building of temples or altars, beyond those in common houses, how true is it here! Happy indeed the stones that God chooses to be living stones in this spiritual temple, though they be hammered and hewed to be polished for it, by afflictions and the inward work of mortification and repentance. It is worth the enduring of all, to be fitted for this building. Happy they, beyond all the rest of men, though they be set in never so great honors, as prime parts of politic buildings (states and kingdoms), in the courts of kings, yea, or kings themselves. For all other buildings, and all the parts of them shall be demolished and come to nothing, from the foundation to the cope-stone; all your houses, both cottages and palaces: *the elements shall melt away, and the earth, with all the works in it, shall be consumed*, as our apostle hath it (2 Pet. iii. 10). But this spiritual building shall grow up to heaven; and being come to perfection, shall abide for ever in perfection of beauty and glory. In it shall be found *no unclean thing*, nor unclean person, but only they *that are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

*A holy priesthood.*] For the worship and ceremonies of the Jewish church were all shadows of Jesus Christ, and have their accomplishment in him, not only after a singular manner in his own person, but in a derived way, in his mystical body, his church. The priesthood of the law represented him as the great High Priest that *offered up himself for our sins*, and that is a priesthood altogether incommunicable: neither is there any peculiar office of priesthood for offering sacrifice in the Christian church, but his alone who is head of it. But this dignity that is here mentioned, of a *spiritual priesthood*, offering up *spiritual sacrifices*, is common to all those who are in Christ. As they are living stones built on him into a spiritual temple, so, they are priests of that same temple made by him. (Rev. i. 6.) As he was, after a transcendent manner, temple, and priest, and sacrifice, so, in their kind, are Christians all these three through him; and by his Spirit that is in them, their offerings through him are made acceptable.

We have here, 1. The office; 2. The service of that office; 3. The success of that service.

1. The office. The death of Jesus Christ, as being every way powerful for reconcilement and union, did not only break down the partition-wall of guiltiness that stood between God and man, but the wall of ceremonies that stood between the Jews and the Gentiles: it made all that believe, one with God, *and made of both one*, as the apostle speaks—united them one to another. The way of salvation was made known, not to one nation only, but to all people: so that whereas the knowledge of God was before confined to one little corner, it is now diffused through the nations; and whereas the dignity of their priesthood stayed in a few persons, all they who believe are now thus dignified to be priests unto God the Father. And this was signified by the rending of the veil of the temple at his death; not only that those ceremonies and sacrifices were to cease, as being all fulfilled in him, but tha



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the people of God, who were before by that veil held out in the outer court, were to be admitted into the Holy Place, as being all of them priests, and fitted to offer sacrifices.

The priesthood of the law was holy, and its holiness was signified by many outward things suitable to their manner, by *anointings*, and *washings*, and *vestments;* but in this spiritual priesthood of the gospel, holiness itself is instead of all those, as being the substance of all. The children of God are all anointed, and purified, and clothed with holiness. But then,

2. There is here the service of this office, namely, *to offer*. There is no priesthood without sacrifice, for these terms are correlative, and offering sacrifices was the chief employment of the legal priests. Now, because the priesthood here spoken of is altogether spiritual, therefore the sacrifices must be so too, as the apostle here expresses it.

We are saved the pains and cost of bringing bullocks and rams, and other such sacrifices; and these are in their stead. As the apostle speaks (Heb. vii. 12) of the high priesthood of Christ, that *the priesthood being changed, there followed of necessity a change of the law;* so, in this priesthood of Christians, there is a change of the kind of sacrifice from the other. All sacrifice is not taken away, but it is changed from the offering of those things formerly in use to spiritual sacrifices.

Now these are every way preferable; they are easier and cheaper to us, and yet more precious and acceptable to God; as it follows here in the text. Even in the time when the other sacrifices were in request, these spiritual offerings had ever the precedence in God's account, and without them he hated and despised all burnt-offerings and the largest sacrifices, though they were then according to his own appointment. How much more should we abound in spiritual sacrifice, who are eased of the other! How much more holds that answer now, that was given even in those times to the inquiry, *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?* &c. (Mic. vi. 6.) You need not all that trouble and expense, *thousands of rams*, &c.: that is at hand which God requires most of all, namely, *to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God*. So, Psalm l. 23: *Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me*. That which is peculiarly spoken of Christ, holds in Christians by conformity with him.

But though the spiritual sacrificing is easier in its own nature, yet, to the corrupt nature of man, it is by far the harder. He would rather choose still all the toil and cost of the former way, if it were in his option. This was the sin of the Jews in those times, that they leaned the soul upon the body's service too much, and would have done enough of that, to be dispensed from this spiritual service. Hence are the Lord's frequent reproofs and complaints of this, Psalm l., Isai. i., &c. Hence the willingness in popery for outward work, for penances and satisfactions of bodies and purses—anything of that kind, if it might serve, rather than the inward work of repentance and mortification, the spiritual service and sacrifices of the soul. But the answer to all those from God, is that of the prophet: *Who hath required these things at your hands?*

Indeed, the sacred writers press works of charity, if they be done with a right hand, and the left hand not so much as acquainted with the business, as our Savior speaks, *Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth*. (Matt. vi. 3.) They must be done with a right and single intention, and from a right principle moving to them, without any vain opinion of meriting by them with God, or any vain desire of gaining applause with men, but merely out of love to God, and to man for his sake. Thus they become one of these spiritual sacrifices, and therefore ought by no means to be neglected by Christian priests, that is, by any who are Christians.

Another spiritual sacrifice is, *the prayers of the saints:* Rev. v. 8; Psal. cxli. 2. *Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice*. It is not the composition of prayer, or the eloquence of expression, that is the sweetness of it in God's account, and makes it a sacrifice of a pleasing smell or sweet odor to him, but the breathing forth of the desire of the heart; that is what makes it a spiritual sacrifice; otherwise, it is as carnal, and dead, and worthless in God's account, as the carcasses of beasts. Incense can neither smell nor ascend without fire; no more doth prayer, unless it arises from a bent of spiritual affection; it is that which both makes it smell, and sends it heavenward, makes it never leave moving upward till it come before God, and smell sweet in his nostrils, which few, too few, of our prayers do.

Praise also is a *sacrifice;* to make respectful and honorable mention of the name of God, and of his goodness; to bless him humbly and heartily. See Heb. xiii. 15, and Ps. l. 14, 23. *Offer unto God thanksgiving. Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me*. And this is that sacrifice that shall never end, but continues in heaven to eternity.

Then, *a holy course of life* is called the *sacrifice of righteousness*, Psal. iv. 6, and Phil. iv. 18. So also Heb. xiii. 16, where the apostle shows what sacrifices succeed to those which, as he hath taught at large, are abolished. Christ was sacrificed for us, and that offering alone was powerful to take away sin but our gratulatory sacrifices, praise and alms, are as incense burnt to God, of which as the standers-by find the sweet smell, so, the holy life of Christians smells sweet to those with whom they live. But the wicked, as putrefied carcasses, are of a noisome smell to God and man. *They are corrupt: they have done abominable works*. Psal. xiv. 4.

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In a word, that sacrifice of ours which includes all these, and without which none of these can be rightly offered, is *Ourselves*, our whole selves. Our *bodies* are to be presented *a living sacrifice*, Rom. xii. 1; and they are not that without our souls. It is our heart given, that gives all the rest, for that commands all. *My son, give me thy heart*, and then the other will follow; *thine eyes will delight in my ways*. This makes the eyes, ears, tongue, and hands, and all, to be holy, as God's peculiar property; and being once given and consecrated to him, it becomes sacrilege to turn them to any unholy use. This makes a man delight to hear and speak of things that concern God, and to think on him frequently, to be holy in his secret thoughts, and in all his ways. In everything we bring him, every thanksgiving and prayer we offer, his eye is upon the heart: he looks if it be along with our offering, and if he miss it, he cares not for all the rest, but throws it back again.

The heart must be offered withal, and the whole heart, all of it entirely given to him. *Se totum obtulit Christus pro nobis:* Christ offered up his whole self for us. In another sense, which crosses not this, thy heart must not be *whole*, but *broken*. Psal. li. 17. But if thou find it unbroken, yet give it him, with a desire that it may be broken. And if it be broken, and if, when thou hast given it him, he break it more, yea, and melt it too, yet thou shalt not repent thy gift; for he breaks and melts it, that he may refine it, and make it up a new and excellent frame, and may impress his own image on it, and make it holy, and so like to himself.

Let us then give him ourselves, or nothing; and to give ourselves to him, is not his advantage, but ours. As the philosopher said to his poor scholar, who, when others gave him great gifts, told him, *He had nothing but himself to give: It is well*, said he, *and I will endeavor to give thee back to thyself, better than I received thee;* thus doth God with us, and thus doth a Christian make himself his daily sacrifice: he renews this gift of himself every day to God, and receiving it every day bettered again, still he hath the more delight in giving it as being fitter for God, the more it is sanctified by former sacrificing.

Now that whereby we offer all other spiritual sacrifices, and even ourselves, is love. That is the holy fire that burns up all, sends up our prayers, and our hearts, and our whole selves a whole burnt-offering to God; and, as the fire of the altar, it is originally from Heaven, being kindled by God's own love to us; and by this the church (and so each believer) ascends like a *straight pillar of smoke* (as the word is, Cant. iii. 6), going even up to God *perfumed with aloes and all the spices*, all the graces of the Spirit received from Christ, but above all, with his own merits.

How far from this are the common multitude of us, though professing to be Christians! Who considers his holy calling? As the peculiar holiness of the ministry should be much in their eye and thoughts who are called to it, as *they* should study to be answerably eminent in holiness, so, all you that are Christians, consider, you are priests unto God: being called a *holy priesthood*, thus you ought to be. But if we speak what we are indeed, we must say rather, we are an unholy priesthood, a shame to that name and holy profession. Instead of the sacrifice of a godly life, and the incense of prayer and praise, in families and alone, what is there with many, but the filthy vapors of profane speaking and a profane life, as a noisome smell arising out of a dunghill?

But you that have once offered up yourselves unto God, and are still doing so with all the services you can reach, continue to do so, and be assured, that how unworthy soever yourselves and all your offerings be, yet they shall not be rejected.

The 3d thing here observable is, the success of that service: *Acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*, Heb. xiii. 16. The children of God do delight in offering sacrifices to him; but if they might not know that they were well taken at their hands, this would discourage them much; therefore this is added. How often do the godly find it in their sweet experience, that when they come to pray, he welcomes them, and gives them such evidences of his love, as they would not exchange for all worldly pleasures! And when this doth not so presently appear at other times, yet they ought to believe it. He accepts themselves and their ways when offered in sincerity, though never so mean; though they sometimes have no more than a sigh or a groan, it is most properly a spiritual sacrifice.

Stay not away because thou, and the gifts thou offerest, are inferior to the offering of others. No, none are excluded for that; only give what thou hast, and act with affection, for that he regards most. Under the law, they who had not a lamb, were welcome with a pair of pigeons. So that the Christian may say: *What I am, Lord, I offer myself unto thee, to be wholly thine; and had I a thousand times more of outward or inward gifts, all should be thine; had I a greater estate, or wit, or learning, or power, I would endeavor to serve thee with all. What I have, I offer thee, and it is most truly thine; it is but of thy own that I give thee.* No one needs forbear sacrifice for poverty, for what God desires, is, the heart, and there is none so poor, but hath a heart to give him.

But meanness is not all; there is guiltiness on ourselves and on all we offer; our prayers and services are polluted. But this hinders not neither; for our acceptance is not for ourselves, but for the sake of one who hath no guiltiness at all: *Acceptable by Jesus*

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*Christ*. In him, our persons are clothed with righteousness, and in his clothing, we are, as Isaac said of Jacob in his brother's garments, *as the smell of a field that the Lord hath blessed*, Gen. xxvii. 27. And all our other sacrifices, our prayers, and services, if we offer them by him, and put them into his hand, to offer to the Father, then doubt not they will be accepted in him; for this *by Jesus Christ*, is relative both to our offering and our acceptance. We ought not to offer anything but *by him*, Heb. xiii. 15; and so, we are well-pleasing to the Father. For he is his well-beloved Son, in whom his soul is delighted; not only delighted and pleased with himself but *in him*, with all things and persons that appear in him, and are presented by him.

And this alone answers all our doubts. For we ourselves, as little as we see that way, yet may see so much in our best services, so many wanderings in prayer, so much deadness, &c., as would make us still doubtful of acceptance so that we might say with Job, *Although he had answered me, yet would I not believe that he had hearkened to me:* were it not for this, that our prayers and all our sacrifices pass through Christ's hand. He is that *angel that hath much sweet odors*, to mingle with *the prayers of the saints*. Rev. viii. 3, 4. He purifies them with his own merits and intercession, and so makes them pleasing unto the Father. How ought our hearts to be knit to him, by whom we are brought into favor with God, and kept in favor with him, in whom we obtain all the good we receive, and in whom all we offer is accepted! In him are all our supplies of grace, and our hopes of glory.

VER. 6. Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture; Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

THAT which is the chief of the works of God, is therefore very reasonably the chief subject of his word, as both most excellent in itself, and of most concernment for us to know; and this is, the saving of lost mankind by his Son. Therefore *is his name as precious ointment*, or perfume, diffused through the whole Scripture; all these holy leaves smell of it, not only those that were written after his coming, but those that were written before. *Search the Scriptures*, says he himself, *for they testify of me* (John v. 39), namely, the scriptures of the Old Testament, which were alone then written; and to evidence this, both himself and his apostles make so frequent use of their testimony, and we find so much of them inserted into the New, as being both one in substance; their lines meeting in the same Jesus Christ as their centre.

The apostle having, in the foregoing verse, expressed the happy estate and dignity of Christians under the double notion, 1, of a spiritual house or temple; 2, of a spiritual priesthood—here amplifies and confirms both from the writings of the prophets; the former, verses 6, 7, 8; the latter, verse 9. The places that he cites touching this building, are most pertinent, for they have clearly in them all that he spoke of it, both concerning the foundation and the edifice; as the first, in these words of Isaiah (chap. xxviii. 16), *Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone*, &c.

Let this commend the Scriptures much to our diligence and affection, that their great theme is, our Redeemer, and redemption wrought by him; that they contain the doctrine of his excellences—are the lively picture of his matchless beauty. Were we more in them, we should daily see more of him in them, and so of necessity love him more. But we must look within them: the letter is but the case; the spiritual sense is what we should desire to see. We usually huddle them over, and see no further than their outside, and therefore find so little sweetness in them: we read them, but we *search* them not, as he requires. Would we dig into those golden mines, we should find treasures of comfort that can not be spent, but which would furnish us in the hardest times.

The prophecy here cited, if we look upon it in its own place, we shall find inserted in the middle of a very sad denunciation of judgment again the Jews. And this is usual with the prophets, particularly with this evangelical prophet Isaiah, to uphold the spirits of the godly, in the worst times, with this one great consolation, the promise of the Messiah, as weighing down all, alike temporal distresses and deliverances. Hence are those sudden ascents (so frequent in the prophets) from their present subject to this great *hope of Israel*. And if this expectation of a Savior was so pertinent a comfort in all estates, so many ages before the accomplishment of it, how wrongfully do we undervalue it being accomplished, if we can not live upon it, and answer all with it, and sweeten all our griefs, with this advantage, that there *is a foundation-stone laid in Sion*, on which they that are builded shall be sure not to be ashamed.

In these words there are five things, 1. This foundation-stone; 2. The laying of it; 3. The building on it; 4. The firmness of this building; And 5. The greatness and excellency of the work.

1*st*, For the *foundation*, called here, a *chief corner-stone*. Though the prophet's words are not precisely rendered, yet the substance and sense of them are the same. In Isaiah, both expressions, *a foundation* and *a corner-stone*, are employed (chap. xxviii. 16), the corner-stone in the foundation being the main support of the building, and throughout, the corner-stones uniting and knitting the building together; and therefore the same word, *a corner*, is frequently taken in Scripture for *princes*, or heads of people (see Judg. xx. 2; 1 Sam. xiv. 38), because good governers and

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government are that which upholds and unites the societies of people in states or kingdoms as one building. And Jesus Christ is indeed the alone head and king of his church, who gives it laws, and rules it in wisdom and righteousness; the alone rock on which his church is built; not Peter (if we will believe St. Peter himself, as here he teacheth us), much less his pretended successors; He is the foundation and corner-stone that knits together the walls of Jews and Gentiles, *having made of both one*, as St. Paul speaks (Eph. ii. 14), and unites the whole number of believers into one everlasting temple, and bears the weight of the whole fabric.

*Elected*] or chosen out for the purpose, and altogether fit for it. Isaiah hath it, *A stone of trial*, or *a tried stone*, as things among men are best chosen after trial. So, Jesus Christ was certainly known by the Father, as most fit for that work to which he chose him before he tried him, as after, upon trial in his life, and death, and resurrection, he proved fully answerable to his Father's purpose, in all that was appointed him.

All the strength of angels combined, had not sufficed for that business; but the wise architect of this building knew both what it would cost, and what a foundation was needful to bear so great and so lasting a structure as he intended. Sin having defaced and demolished the first building of man in the integrity of his creation, it was God's design, out of the very ruins of fallen man, to raise a more lasting edifice than the former, one that should not be subject to decay, and therefore he fitted for it a foundation that might be everlasting. The sure founding is the main thing requisite in order to a lasting building; therefore, that it might stand for the true honor of his majesty (which Nebuchadnezzar vainly boasted of his Babel), he chose his own Son, *made flesh*. He was God, that he might be a strong foundation; he was man, that he might be suitable to the nature of the stones whereof the building was to consist, that they might join the cement together.

*Precious.*] Inestimably precious, by all the conditions that can give worth to any; by rareness, and by inward excellency, and by useful virtues. *Rare* he is, out of doubt; there is not such a person in the world again; therefore he is called by the same prophet (Isa. ix. 6), *wonderful*, full of wonders:—the power of God and the frailty of man dwelling together in his person; *the ancient of days* becoming an infant; he that *stretched forth the heavens*, bound up in swaddling clothes in that his infancy, and in his full age stretched forth on the cross; altogether *spotless* and *innocent*, and yet suffering not only the unjust cruelties of men, but the just wrath of God his Father; *the Lord of life*, and yet dying; his *excellency* appears in the same things, in that he is the Lord of life, *God blessed for ever*, equal with the Father: the sparkling brightness of this precious stone is no less than this, that he is *the brightness of the Father's glory* (Heb. i. 3); so bright, that men could not have beheld him appearing in himself; therefore he veiled it with our flesh; and yet, through that it shined and sparkled so, that the Apostle St. John says of himself and of those others who had their eyes opened, and looked right upon him, *he dwelt among us*, and he had a tent like ours, and yet, through that *we saw his glory, as the glory of the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth* (John i. 14),—the Deity filling his human nature with all manner of grace in its highest perfection. And Christ is not only thus excellent in himself, but of precious *virtue*, which he lets forth and imparts to others; of such virtue, that a touch of him is the only cure of spiritual diseases. Men tell of strange virtues of some stones; but it is certain that this precious stone hath not only virtue to heal the sick, but even to raise the dead. Dead bodies he raised in the days of his abode on earth, and dead souls he still doth raise by the power of his word. The prophet Malachi calls him *the Sun of Righteousness* (ch. iv. 2), which includes in it the rareness and excellency we speak of: he is singular; as there is but one Sun in the world, so but one Savior: and his lustre is such a stone as outshines the sun in its fullest brightness. And then, for his useful virtue, the Prophet adds, that *he hath healing under his wings*. This his worth is unspeakable, and remains infinitely beyond all these resemblances.

*2dly*, There is here *the laying* of this foundation: it is said to be laid in *Sion;* that is, it is laid in the church of God. And it was first laid in *Sion*, literally, that being then the seat of the church and of the true religion: he was laid there, in his manifestation in the flesh, and suffering and dying, and rising again; and afterward, being preached through the world, he became the foundation of his church in all places where his name was received; and so was a stone growing great, till it *filled the whole earth*, as Daniel hath it, ch. ii. 35.

He saith, *I lay;* by which the Lord expresseth this to be his own proper work, as the psalmist speaks of the same subject (Psal. cxviii. 23). *This is the Lord's doing; and it is marvellous in our eyes.* So Isaiah, speaking of this promised Messiah, *The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this*, ch. ix. 7.

And it is not only said, *I lay;* because God the Father had the first thought of this great work—the model of it was in his mind from eternity, and the accomplishment of it was by his almighty power in the morning of his his Son's birth, and his life, and death, and resurrection; but also to signify the freeness of his grace, in giving his Son to be a foundation of happiness to man, without the least motion from man, or motive in man to draw him to it. And this seems to be signified by

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the unexpected inserting of these prophetical promises of the Messiah, in the midst of complaints of the people's wickedness, and threatening them with punishment; to intimate that there is no connexion between this work and anything on man's part to procure it: *q. d.* Although you do thus provoke me to destroy you, yet, of myself I have other thoughts, there is another purpose in my mind. And it is observable to this purpose, that that clearest promise of the virgin's Son is given, not only unrequired, but being refused by that profane king Ahaz, Isa. vii. 10–13.

This, again, that the Lord himself is the layer of this corner-stone, teaches us the firmness of it; which is likewise expressed in the prophet's words, very emphatically, by redoubling the same word, *Musad, Musad: fundamentum, fundamentum.*

So, Psal. ii. 6, *I have set my king upon my holy hill of Sion:*—who then shall dethrone him? *I have given him the heathen for his inheritance, and the ends of the earth for his possession;* and who will hinder him to take possession of his right? If any offer to do so, what shall they be, but a number of earthern vessels fighting against an iron sceptre, and so, certainly breaking themselves in pieces? Thus here, *I lay this foundation-stone;* and if I lay it, who shall remove it? and what I build upon it, who shall be able to cast down? For it is the glory of this great master-builder, that the whole fabric which is of his building can not be ruined; and for that end hath he laid an unmoveable foundation; and for that end are we taught and reminded of its firmness, that we may have this confidence concerning the Church of God that is built upon it. To the eye of nature, the church seems to have no foundation: as Job speaks of the earth, that *it is hung upon nothing*, and yet, as the earth remaineth firm, being established in its place by the word and power of God, the church is most firmly founded upon the *word made flesh*—Jesus Christ as its *chief corner-stone.* And as all the winds that blow can not remove the earth out of its place, so neither can all the attempts of men, no, nor of *the gates of hell, prevail against the church,* Matt. xvi. 18. It may be beaten with very boisterous storms, *but it can not fall, because it is founded upon this Rock,* Matt. vii. 25. Thus it is with the whole house, and thus with every stone in it; as here it follows, *He that believeth shall not be confounded.*

*3dly*, There is next, *the building on this foundation.* To be built on Christ, is plainly to believe in him. But in this they most deceive themselves; they hear of great privileges and happiness in Christ, and presently imagine it as all theirs, without any more ado; as that mad man of Athens, who wrote up all the ships that came into the haven for his own. We consider not what it is to believe in him, nor what is the necessity of this believing in order that we may be partakers of the salvation that he hath wrought. It is not they that have heard of him, or that have some common knowledge of him, or that are able to discourse of him, and speak of his person and nature aright, but *they that believe in him.* Much of our knowledge is like that of the poor philosopher, who defineth riches exactly, and discourseth of their nature, but possesseth none; or we are as a geometrician, who can measure land exactly in all its dimensions, but possesseth not a foot thereof. And truly it is but a lifeless unsavory knowledge that men have of Christ by all books and study, till he reveal himself and persuade the heart to *believe in him.* Then, indeed, when it sees him, and is made one with him, it says of all the reports it heard, I heard much, yet *the half was not told me.* There is in lively faith, when it is infused into the soul, a clearer knowledge of Christ and his excellency than before, and with it, a recumbency of the soul upon him as the foundation of its life and comfort; a resolving to rest on him, and not to depart from him upon any terms. Though I be beset on all hands, be accused by the law, and by mine own conscience, and by Satan, and have nothing to answer for myself, yet, here I will stay, for I am sure in him there is salvation, and nowhere else. All other refuges are but lies (as it is expressed in the words before these in the prophet), poor base shifts that will do no good. God hath laid this precious stone in Sion, for this very purpose, that weary souls may rest upon it; and why should not I make use of it according to his intention? He hath not forbid any, how wretched soever, to believe, but commands it, and himself works it where he will, even in the vilest sinners.

Think it not enough that you know this stone is laid, but see whether you are built on it by faith. The multitude of imaginary believers lie round about it, but they are never the better nor the surer for that, any more than stones that lie loose in heaps near unto a foundation, but are not joined to it. There is no benefit to us by Christ, without union with him; no comfort in his riches, without an interest in them, and a title to them, by virtue of that union. Then is the soul right when it can say, *He is altogether lovely*, and as the Spouse (Cant. iii. 16), *He is mine, my well-beloved.* This union is the spring of all spiritual consolations. And faith, by which we are thus united, is a Divine work He that laid this foundation in Sion with his own hand, works likewise, with the same hand, faith in the heart, by which it is knit to this corner-stone. It is not easy as we imagine, to believe. See Eph. i. 19. Many that think they believe, are, on the contrary, like those of whom the prophet there speaks, as *hardened in sin* and carnally secure, whom he represents as in covenant with hell and death, walking in sin, and yet promising themselves impunity.

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*4thly*, There is *the firmness* of this Building, namely, *He that believeth on him shall not be confounded.* This firmness is answerable to the nature of the foundation. Not only the whole frame, but every stone of it abideth sure. It is a simple mistake, to judge the persuasion of perseverance to be self-presumption: they that have it, are far from building it on themselves, but their foundation is that which makes them sure; because it doth not only remain firm itself, but indissolubly supports all that are once built on it. In the prophet, whence this is cited, it is, *Shall not make haste*, but the sense is one: they that are disappointed and ashamed in their hopes, run to and fro, and seek after some new resource; this they shall not need to do, who come to Christ. The believing soul makes haste to Christ, but it never finds cause to hasten from him; and though the comfort it expects and longs for, be for a time deferred, yet it gives not over, knowing that in due time it shall rejoice, and shall not have cause to blush and think shame of its confidence in him. David expresseth this distrust, by *making haste*, Psal. xxxi. 22; and cxvi. 11: *I was too hasty when I said so.* Hopes frustrated, especially where they have been raised high, and continued long, do reproach men with folly, and so shame them. And thus do all earthly hopes serve us when we lean much upon them. We find usually those things that have promised us most content pay us with vexation; and they not only prove broken reeds, deceiving our trust, but hurtful, running their broken splinters into our hand who leaned on them. This sure Foundation is laid for us, that our souls may be established on it, and be as *Mount Sion that can not be removed*, Psal. cxxv. 1. Such times may come as will shake all other supports, but this holds out against all, Ps. xlvi. 2: *Though the earth be removed, yet will not we fear.* Though the frame of the world wear cracking about a man's ears, he may here it unaffrighted who is built on this foundation. Why then do we choose to *build upon the sand?* Believe it, wheresoever we lay our confidence and affection beside Christ, it shall sooner or later repent us and shame us; either happily in time, while we may yet change them for him, and have recourse to him; or miserably, when it is too late. Remember that we must die and *must appear before the judgment-seat of God*, and that the things we doat on here, have neither power to stay us here, nor have we power to take them along with us, nor, if we could, would they at all profit us there; and therefore, when we look back upon them all at parting, we shall wonder what fools we were to make so poor a choice. And in *that great day wherein all faces shall gather blackness* (Joel ii. 6), and be filled with confusion, that have neglected to make Christ their stay when he was offered them, then it shall appear how happy they are who have trusted in him; *They shall not be confounded*, but shall *lift up their faces*, and be acquitted in him. In their present estate they may be exercised, but then *they shall not be confounded*, nor ashamed—there is a double negation in the original—*by no means*; they shall *be more than conquerors, through him who hath loved them.* Rom. viii. 37.

*5thly*, The last thing observable is, the greatness and excellency of the work, intimated in that first word, *Behold*, which imports this work to be very remarkable, and calls the eyes to fix upon it.

The Lord is marvellous in the least of his works; but in this he hath manifested more of his wisdom and power, and let out more of his love to mankind, than in all the rest. Yet we are foolish, and childishly gaze about us upon trifles, and let this great work pass unregarded; we scarcely afford it half an eye. Turn your wandering eyes this way; look upon this *Precious Stone*, and behold him, not in mere speculation, but so behold him as to lay hold on him. For we see he is therefore here set forth, that we may *believe on him, and so not be confounded*; that we may attain this blessed union, that can not be dissolved. All other unions are dissoluble: a man may be plucked from his dwelling-house and lands, or they from him, though he have never so good a title to them; may be removed from his dearest friends, the husband from the wife, if not by other accidents in their lifetime, yet sure by death, the great dissolver of all those unions, and of that straitest one, of the soul with the body; but it can do nothing against this union, but, on the contrary, perfects it. *For I am persuaded*, says St. Paul, *that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Romans viii. 38, 39.

There is a twofold mistake concerning faith: on the one side, they that are altogether void of it, abusing and flattering themselves in a vain opinion that they have it; and, on the other side, they that have it, misjudging their own condition, and so depriving themselves of much comfort and sweetness that they might find in their believing.

The former is the worse, and yet by far the commoner evil. What one says of wisdom, is true of faith: *Many would seek after it, and attain it, if they did not falsely imagine that they have attained it already.** There is nothing more contrary to the lively nature of faith, than for the soul not to be at all busied with the thoughts of its own spiritual condition, and yet this very character of unbelief passes with a great many for believing. They doubt not, that is, indeed they consider

* Puto multos, potuisse ad sapientiam pervenire, nisi putassent se jam pervenisse.—SENECA. *De Tranquillitate.*

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not what they are; their minds are not at all on these things—are not awakened to seek diligently after Jesus, so as not to rest till they find him. They are well enough without him; it suffices them to hear there is such a one; but they ask not themselves, "Is he mine, or no?" Surely, if that be all—not to doubt—the brutes believe as well as they. It were better, out of all question, to be laboring under doubtings, if it be a more hopeful condition, to find a man groaning and complaining, than speechless, and breathless, and not stirring at all.

There be in spiritual doubtings two things; there is a solicitous care of the soul concerning its own estate, and a diligent inquiry into it, and that is laudable, being a true work of the Spirit of God; but the other thing in them is, perplexity and distrust arising from darkness and weakness in the soul. Where there is a great deal of smoke, and no clear flame, it argues much moisture in the matter, yet it witnesseth certainly that there is fire there; and therefore, dubious questioning of a man concerning himself is a much better evidence than that senseless deadness which most take for believing. Men that know nothing in sciences, have no doubts. He never truly believed, who was not made first sensible and convinced of unbelief. This is the Spirit's first errand in the world, to *convince it of sin;* and the sin is this, that *they believe not*, John xvi. 8, 9. If the faith that thou hast, grew out of thy natural heart of itself, be assured it is but a weed. The right plant of faith is always set by God's own hand, and it is watered and preserved by him; because exposed to many hazards, he watches it night and day. Isai. xxvii. 3: *I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it; I will keep it night and day.*

Again, how impudent is it in the most, to pretend they believe, while they wallow in profaneness! If faith unite the soul unto Christ, certainly it puts it into participation of his Spirit; *for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*, says St. Paul. This faith in Christ brings us into communion with God. Now, *God is light*, says St. John, and he therefore infers, *If we say we have fellowship with God, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth*, 1 John i. 6. The lie appears in our practice, an unsuitableness in our carriage; as one said of him that signed his verse wrong, *Fecit solœcismum manu.*

But there be imaginery believers who are a little more refined, who live after a blameless, yea, and a religious manner, as to their outward behavior, and yet are but appearances of Christians, have not the living work of faith within, and all these exercises are *dead works* in their hands. Among these, some may have such motions within them as may deceive themselves, while their external deportment deceives others; they may have some transient touches of desire to Christ, upon the unfolding of his excellencies in the preaching of the word, and upon some conviction of their own necessity, and may conceive some joy upon thoughts of apprehending him; and yet, all this proves but a vanishing fancy, an embracing of a shadow. And because men who are thus deluded meet not with Christ indeed, do not really find his sweetness, therefore, within a while, they return to the pleasures of sin, and *their latter end proves worse than their beginning*, 1 Pet. ii. 20. Their hearts could not possibly be steadfast, because there was nothing to fix them on, in all that work wherein Christ himself was wanting.

But the truly believing soul that is brought unto Jesus Christ, and fastened upon him by God's own hand, abides stayed on him, and departs not. And in these persons, the very belief of the things that are spoken concerning Christ in the gospel, the persuasion of Divine truth, is of a higher nature than the common consent that is called historical; they have another knowledge and evidence of *the mysteries of the kingdom*, than natural men can have. This is indeed the ground of all, the very thing that causes a man to rest upon Christ, when he hath a persuasion wrought in his heart by the Spirit of God, that Christ is an able Redeemer, a sufficient Savior, *able to save all that come to him*, Heb. vii. 25. Then, upon this, the heart resolves upon that course: Seeing I am persuaded of this, that *whoso believes in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life* (or as it is here, *shall not be confounded*), I am to deliberate no longer: this is the thing I must do, I must lay my soul upon him, upon one who is an Almighty Redeemer: and it does so. Now, these first actings of faith have in themselves an evidence that distinguishes them from all that is counterfeit, a light of their own, by which the soul, wherein they are, may discern them and say, "This is the right work of faith;" especially when God shines upon the soul, and clears it in the discovery of his own work within it.

And further, they may find the influence of faith upon the affectionate *purifying* them, as our apostle says of it, Acts xv. 9. Faith knits the heart to a Holy Head, a pure Lord, the Spring of purity, and therefore can not choose but make it pure: it is a beam from Heaven, that raises the mind to a heavenly temper. Although there are remains of sin in a believing soul, yet it is a hated, wearisome guest there. It exists there, not as its delight, but as its greatest grief and malady, which it is still lamenting and complaining of; it had rather be rid of it than gain a world. Thus the soul is purified from the love of sin.

So then, where these are—a spiritual apprehension of the promises, a cleaving of the soul unto Christ, and such a delight in him as makes sin vile and distasteful, so that the heart is set against it, and, as the needle

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touched with the loadstone, is still turned toward Christ, and looks at him in all estates —the soul that is thus disposed, hath certainly interest in him; and, therefore, ought not to affect an humor of doubting, but to conclude, that how unworthy soever in itself, yet being in him, *it shall not be ashamed:* not only it shall never have cause to think shame of him, but all its just cause of shame in itself shall be taken away; it shall be covered with his righteousness, and appear so before the Father. Who must not think, "If my sins were to be set in order, and appear against me, how would my face be filled with shame! Though there were no more, if some thoughts that I am guilty of were laid to my charge, I were utterly ashamed and undone. Oh! there is nothing in myself but matter of shame, but yet, in Christ there is more matter of glorying, who endured shame, that we might not be ashamed. We can not distrust ourselves enough, nor trust enough in him. Let it be right faith, and there can be no excess in believing. Though I have sinned against him, and abused his goodness, yet I will not leave him; for *whither should I go?* He, and none but he, *hath the words of eternal life.* Yea, though he being so often offended, should threaten to leave me to the shame of my own follies, yet I will stay by him, and wait for a better answer, and I know I shall obtain it; this assurance being given me for my comfort, that *whosoever believes in him shall not be ashamed.*"

VER. 7. Unto you, therefore, which believe, he is precious; but unto them who be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner;

VER. 8. And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed.

BESIDES all the opposition that meets faith within, in our hearts, it hath this without, that it rows against the great stream of the world's opinion; and therefore hath need, especially where it is very tender and weak, to be strengthened against that. The multitude of unbelievers, and the considerable quality of many of them in the world, are continuing causes of that very multitude; and the fewness of them that truly believe, doth much to the keeping of them still few. And as this prejudice prevails with them that believe not, so it may sometimes assault the mind of a believer, when he thinks how many, and many of them wise men in the world, reject Christ. Whence can this be? Particularly the believing Jews, to whom this epistle is addressed, might think it strange, that not only the Gentiles, who were strangers to true religion, but their own nation, that was the select people of God, and had the light of his oracles kept in among them only, should yet, so many of them, yea, and the chief of them, be despisers and haters of Jesus Christ; and that they who were best versed in the law, and so seemed best able to judge of the Messiah foretold, should have persecuted Christ all his life, and at last put him to a shameful death.

That they may know that this makes nothing against him, nor ought to invalidate their faith at all, but that it rather indeed testifies with Christ, and so serves to confirm them in believing, the apostle makes use of those prophetical Scriptures, which foretell the unbelief and contempt with which the most would entertain Christ withal; as old Simeon speaks of him, when he was come, agreeably to those former predictions, that he should be a *sign of contradiction,* Luke ii. 34; that, as he was the promised sign of salvation to believers, so he should be a very mark of enmities and contradictions to the unbelieving world. The passages the apostle here useth suit with his present discourse, and with the words cited from Isaiah in the former verse, continuing the resemblance of *a corner-stone:* they are taken partly from the one hundred and eighteenth Psalm, partly out of the eighth chapter of Isaiah.

*Unto you, &c.*] Wonder not that others refuse him, but believe the more for that, because you see the word to be true even in their not believing of it; it is fulfilled and verified by their very rejecting of it as false.

And whatsoever are the world's thoughts concerning Christ, that imports not, for they know him not; but you that do indeed believe, I dare appeal to yourselves, to your own faith that you have of him, whether he is not precious to you, whether you do not really find him fully answerable to all that is spoken of him in the word, and to all that you have accordingly believed concerning him.

We are here to consider, I. The opposition of the persons; and then, II. The opposition of the things spoken of them.

I. The persons are opposed under the names of *believers* and *disobedient,* or unbelievers; for the word is so near, that it may be taken for unbelief, and it is by some so rendered; and the things are fully as near to each other as the words that signify them —*disobedience* and *unbelief.*

1. Unbelief is itself the grand disobedience. For *this is the work of God,* that which the gospel mainly commands, *that ye believe,* John vi. 29; therefore the apostle calls it *the obedience of faith,* Rom. i. 5. And there is nothing indeed more worthy of the name of obedience, than the subjection of the mind to receive and to believe those supernatural truths which the gospel teaches concerning Jesus Christ; to obey so as to have, as the apostle speaks, the *impression* of that divine pattern stamped upon the heart: to have the heart delivered up, as the word there is, and laid under it to receive it, Rom. vi. 17. The word here used for disobedience signifies properly *unpersuasion;* and nothing can more properly express the nature of unbelief than that; and it is the very nature



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of our corrupt hearts; we are *children of disobedience*, or *unpersuasibleness*, Ephes. ii. 2, altogether incredulous toward God, who is truth itself, and pliable as wax in Satan's hand, who works in such persons what he will, as there the apostle expresses. They are most easy of belief to him, who is *the very father of lies*, as our Savior calls him, John viii. 44, *a liar and a murderer from the beginning*, murdering by lies, as he did in the beginning.

2. Unbelief is radically all other disobedience; for all flows from unbelief. This we least of all are ready to suspect; but it is the bitter root of all that ungodliness that abounds among us. A right and lively persuasion of the heart concerning Jesus Christ, alters the whole frame of it, *casts down its high lofty imaginations, and brings*, not only the outward actions, but the very *thoughts unto the obedience of Christ*. 2 Cor. x. 5.

II. As for the things spoken concerning these disobedient unbelievers, these two testimonies taken together, have in them these three things; 1. Their rejection of Christ; 2. Their folly; 3. Their misery in so doing.

1. Their rejection of Christ; they did not receive him, as the Father appointed and designed him; as the foundation and *chief corner-stone*, but slighted him, and threw him by, as unfit for the building; and this did not only the ignorant multitude, but the *builders*, they that professed to have the skill and the office, or power, of building—the doctors of the law, the scribes and pharisees, and chief priests—who thought to carry the matter by the weight of their authority, as overbalancing the belief of those that followed Christ. *Have any of the rulers believed in him? But this people who know not the law are cursed.* John vii. 48, 49.

We need not wonder then, that not only the powers of the world are usually enemies to Christ, and that the contrivers of policies, those builders, leave out Christ in their building, but that the pretended builders of the church of God, though they use the name of Christ, and serve their turn with that, yet reject himself, and oppose the power of his spiritual kingdom. There may be wit and learning, and much knowledge of the Scriptures, among those that are haters of the Lord Christ, and of the power of godliness, and corrupters of the worship of God. It is the spirit of humility and obedience, and saving faith, that teach men to esteem Christ, and build upon him.

2. But the vanity and folly of those builders' opinion, appears in this, that they are overpowered by the great Architect of the church: his purpose stands. Notwithstanding their rejection of Christ, he is still made the head corner-stone. They cast him away by their miscensures and reproaches put upon him, and by giving him up to be crucified and then cast into the grave, causing a stone to be rolled upon this *stone* which they had so rejected, that it might appear no more, and so thought themselves sure. But even thence did he arise, and *became the head of the corner*. The disciples themselves spake, you know, very doubtfully of their former hopes: *We believed this had been he that would have delivered Israel;* but he corrected their mistake, first by his word, showing them the true method of that great work, *Ought not Christ to suffer first these great things, and so enter into glory?* and then really, by making himself known to them as risen from the dead. When he was by these rejected, and lay lowest, then was he nearest his exaltation: as Joseph in the prison was nearest his preferment. And thus is it with the church of Christ: when it is brought to the lowest and most desperate condition, then is deliverance at hand; it prospers and gains in the event, by all the practices of men against it. And as this corner-stone was fitted to be such, by the very rejection of it, even so is it with the whole building; it rises the higher the more men seek to demolish it.

3. The unhappiness of them that believe not is expressed in the other word, *He is to them a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence*. Because they will not be saved by him, they shall stumble and fall, and be broken to pieces on him, as it is in Isaiah, and in the evangelists. But how is this? Is he who came to save, become a destroyer of men? He whose name is Salvation, proves he destruction to any? Not he himself; his primary and proper use is the former, to be a foundation for souls to build and rest upon; but they who, instead of building upon him, will stumble and fall on him, what wonder, being so firm a stone, though they be broken by their fall! Thus we see the mischief of unbelief, that as other sins disable the law, this disables the very gospel to save us, and turns life into death to us. And this is the misery, not of a few, but of many in Israel. Many that hear of Christ by the preaching of the gospel, shall lament that ever they heard that sound, and shall wish to have lived and died without it, finding so great an accession to their misery, by the *neglect of so great salvation*. They are said to *stumble at the word* because the things that are therein testified concerning Christ, they labor not to understand and prize aright; but either altogether slight them, and account them foolishness, or misconceive and pervert them

The Jews stumbled at the meanness of Christ's birth and life, and the ignominy of his death, not judging of him according to the Scriptures; and we, in another way, think we have some kind of belief that he is the Savior of the world, yet, not making the Scripture the rule of our thoughts concerning him, many of us undo ourselves, and stumble and break our necks upon this rock, mistaking Christ and the way of believing; looking on him as a Savior at large, and judging that enough; not endeavoring to make him

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ours, and to embrace him upon the terms of that new covenant whereof he is Mediator.

*Whereunto also they were appointed.*] This the apostle adds, for the further satisfaction of believers in this point, how it is that so many reject Christ, and stumble at him; telling them plainly, that the secret purpose of God is accomplished in this. God having determined to glorify his justice on impenitent sinners, as he shows his rich mercy in them that believe. Here it were easier to lead you into a deep, than to lead you forth again. I will rather stand on the shore, and silently admire it, than enter into it. This is certain, that the thoughts of God are all not less just in themselves, than deep and unsoundable by us. His justice appears clear, in that man's destruction is always the fruit of his own sin. But to give causes of God's decrees without himself, is neither agreeable with the primitive being of the nature of God, nor with the doctrine of the Scriptures. This is sure, that God is not bound to give us further account of these things, and we are bound not to ask it. Let these two words, as St. Augustine says, answer all, *What art thou, O man?* and, *O the depth!* Rom. ix. 20; xi. 33.

Our only sure way to know that our names are not in that black line, and to be persuaded that he hath chosen us to be saved by his Son, is this, to find that we have chosen him, and are built on him by faith, which is the fruit of his love, who first chooseth us; and that we may read in our esteem of him.

*He is precious.*] Or, *your honor.* The difference is small. You account him your glory and your gain; he is not only *precious* to you, but *preciousness* itself. He is the thing that you make account of, your jewel, which if you keep, though you be robbed of all besides, you know yourselves to be rich enough.

*To you that believe.*] Faith is absolutely necessary to make this due estimate of Christ.

1. The most excellent things, while their worth is undiscerned and unknown, affect us not. Now, faith is the proper seeing faculty of the soul, in relation to Christ: that inward light must be infused from above, to make Christ visible to us; without it, though he is beautiful, yet we are blind; and therefore can not love him for that beauty. But by faith we are enabled to see him who is *fairer than the children of men*, Psal. xlv. 2, yea, to see in him, *the glory of the only begotten Son of God*, John i. 14; and then, it is not possible but to account him *precious*, and to bestow the entire affection of our hearts upon him. And if any one say to the soul, *What is thy beloved more than another?* (Cant. iii. 9), it willingly lays hold on the question, and is glad of an opportunity to extol him.

2. Faith, as it is that which discerns Christ, so it alone appropriates him, makes him our own. And these are the two reasons of our esteeming and affecting anything, its own worth, and our interest in it. Faith begets this esteem of Christ by both: first it discovers to us his excellences, which we could not see before; and then, it makes him ours, gives us possession of whole Christ, all that he hath, and is. As it is faith that commends Christ so much, and describes his comeliness in that song, so that word is the voice of faith, that expresses propriety, *My well-beloved is mine, and I am his.* Cant. ii. 16. And these together make him most precious to the soul. Having once possession of him, then it looks upon all his sufferings as endured particularly for it, and the benefit of them all as belonging to itself. Sure, it will say, can I choose but account him precious, who suffered shame that I might not be ashamed, and suffered death that I might not die; who took that bitter cup of the Father's wrath, and drank it out, that I might be free from it?

Think not that you believe, if your hearts be not taken up with Christ, if his love do not possess your soul, so that nothing is precious to you in respect of him; if you can not despise and trample upon all advantages that either you have or would have, for Christ, and count them, with the great apostle, *loss and dung in comparison of him*, Phil. iii. 8. And if you do esteem him, labor for increase of faith, that you may esteem him more; for as faith grows, so will he still be more precious to you. And if you would have it grow, turn that spiritual eye frequently to him, who is the proper object of it. For even they who are believers, may possibly abate of their love and esteem of Christ, by suffering faith to lie dead within them, and not using it in beholding and applying of Christ; and the world, or some particular vanities, may insensibly creep in, and get into the heart, and cause them much pains ere they can be thrust out again. But when they are daily reviewing those excellences that are in Christ, which first persuaded their hearts to love him, and are discovering still more and more of them, his love will certainly grow, and will chase away those follies that the world doats upon, as unworthy to be taken notice of.

VER. 9. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

IT is a matter of very much consolation and instruction to Christians to know their own estate—what they are as they are Christians. This *Epistle* is much and often upon this point for both those ends; that the reflecting upon their dignities in Christ, may uphold them with comfort under suffering for him; and also, that it may lead them in doing and walking as becomes such a condition. Here it hath been represented to us by a building, a spiritual temple, and by a priesthood conformable to it.

The former is confirmed and illustrated by

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testimonies of Scripture in the preceding verses; the latter in this verse, in which, though it is not expressly cited, yet it is clear that the apostle hath reference to Exod. xix. 5, 6, where this dignity of priesthood, together with the other titles here expressed, is ascribed to all the chosen people of God. It is there a promise made to the nation of the Jews, but under the condition of obedience, and therefore it is most fitly here applied, by the apostle, to the believing Jews, to whom particularly he writes.

It is true, that the external priesthood of the law is abolished by the coming of this great High Priest, Jesus Christ being the body of all those shadows; but this promised dignity of spiritual priesthood is so far from being annulled by Christ, that it is altogether dependant on him, and therefore fails in those that reject Christ, although they be of that nation to which this promise was made. But it holds good in all, of all nations, that believe, and particularly, says the apostle, *it is verified in you.* You that are believing Jews, by receiving Christ, receive withal this dignity.

As the legal priesthood was removed by Christ's fulfilling all that is prefigured, so, he was rejected by them that were, at his coming, in possession of that office: as the standing of that their priesthood was inconsistent with the revealing of Jesus Christ, so, they who were then in it, being ungodly men, their carnal minds had a kind of antipathy against him. Though they pretended themselves builders of the church, and by their calling ought to have been so, yet, they threw away the foundation-stone that God had chosen and designed, and in rejecting it, manifested that they themselves were rejected of God. But, on the contrary, you who have laid your souls on Christ by believing, have this your choosing him as a certain evidence that God hath chosen you to be his *peculiar people*, yea, to be so dignified as to be a *kingly priesthood*, through Christ.

We have here to consider, 1. The estate of Christians, in the words that here describe it; 2. The opposition of it to the state of unbelievers; 3. The end of it.

First. The state of Christians, *A chosen generation.* So, in Psalm xxiv. The psalmist there speaks first of God's universal sovereignty, then of his peculiar choice. *The earth is the Lord's* (ver. 1), but there is a select company appointed for his *holy mountain*, there described; and the description is closed thus, *This the generation of them that seek him.* Thus Deut. x. 14, 15, and Exod. xix. 5, whence this passage is taken, *For all the earth is mine*, and that nation which is a figure of the elect of all nations, God's *peculiar*, beyond all others in the world. As men who have great variety of possessions, yet have usually their special delight in some one beyond all the rest, and choose to reside most in it, and bestow most expense on it to make it pleasant; so doth the Lord of the whole earth choose out to himself from the rest of the world, a number that are *a chosen generation.*

Choosing, here, is the work of effectual calling, or the severing of believers from the rest; for it signifies a difference in their present estate, as do likewise the other words joined with it. But this election is altogether conformable to that of God's eternal decree, and is no other than the execution or performance of it; God's framing of this his building being just according to the idea of it which was in his mind and purpose before all time it is the drawing forth and investing of those into this Christian, this kingly priesthood, whose names were expressly written up for it in the book of life.

*Generation.*] This imports them to be of one race or stock. As the Israelites, who were by outward calling the children of God, were all the *seed of Abraham according to the flesh;* so, they that believe in the Lord Jesus, are *children of the promise*, Gal. iv. 28; and all of them are, by their new birth, one people or generation. They are of one nation, belonging to the same blessed land of promise, all citizens of the New Jerusalem, yea, all children of the same family, whereof Jesus Christ, the *root of Jesse*, is the stock, who is the great *King*, and the *great High Priest.* And thus they are a *royal priesthood.* There is no devolving of his royalty or priesthood on any other, as it is in himself; for his proper dignity is supreme and incommunicable, and there is no succession in his order: he *lives for ever*, and *is priest for ever*, Psal. cx. 4, and *king for ever* too, Psal. xlv. 6. But they that are descended from him, do derive from him, by that new original, this double dignity, in that way that they are capable of it, to be likewise kings and priests, as he is both. They are of the seed-royal, and of the holy seed of the priesthood, inasmuch as they partake of a new life from Christ. Thus, in Rev. i. 5, 6, first, there is his own dignity expressed, then, his dignifying us: *Who is* himself *the first begotten among the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth;* and then it follows, *and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.*

*A royal priesthood.*] That the dignity of believers is expressed by these two together, by *priesthood* and *royalty*, teaches us the worth and excellency of that holy function taken properly, and so, by analogy, the dignity of the ministry of the gospel, which God hath placed in his church, instead of the priesthood of the law; for therefore doth this title of spiritual priesthood fitly signify a great privilege and honor that Christians are promoted to, and it is joined with that of kings, because the proper office of priesthood was so honorable. Before it was established in one family, the chief, the first-born of each family, had a right to this, as a special honor; and

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among the heathens, in some places, their princes and greatest men, yea, their kings were their priests; and, universally, the performing of their holy things was an employment of great honor and esteem among them. Though human ambition hath strained this consideration too high, to the favoring and founding of a monarchical prelacy in the Christian world, yet that abuse of it ought not to prejudge us of this due and just consequence from it, that the holy functions of God's house have very much honor and dignity in them. And the apostle, we see, 2 Cor. iii., prefers the ministry of the gospel to the priesthood of the law. So then, they mistake much, who think it a disparagement to men that have some advantages of birth or wit more than ordinary, to bestow them thus, and who judge the meanest persons and things good enough for this high calling. Surely this conceit can not have place, but in an unholy, irreligious mind, that hath either no thoughts, or very mean thoughts of God. If they who are called to this holy service would themselves consider this aright, it would not puff them up, but humble them: comparing their own worthlessness with this great work, they would wonder at God's dispensation, that should thus have honored them. As St. Paul speaks of himself, Ephes. iii. 8, *Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, &c.*, so, the more a man rightly extols this his calling, the more he humbles himself under the weight of it; and this would make him very careful to walk more suitably to it in eminency of holiness, for in that consists its true dignity.

There is no doubt that this kingly priesthood is the common dignity of all believers: *this honor have all the saints.* They are kings, have victory and dominion given them over the powers of darkness and the lusts of their own hearts, that held them captive, and domineered over them before. Base, slavish lusts, not born to command, yet are the hard taskmasters of unrenewed minds; and there is no true subduing of them, but by the power and Spirit of Christ. They may be quiet for a while in a natural man, but they are then but asleep; as soon as they awake again, they return to hurry and drive him with their wonted violence. Now this is the benefit of receiving the kingdom of Christ into a man's heart, that it makes him a king himself. All the subjects of Christ are kings, not only in regard of that pure crown of glory they hope for, and shall certainly attain, but in the present, they have a kingdom which is the pledge of that other, overcoming the world, and Satan, and themselves, by the power of faith. *Mens bona regnum possidet*, A good mind is a kingdom in itself, it is true; but there is no mind truly good, but that wherein Christ dwells. There is not any kind of spirit in the world, so noble as that spirit that is in a Christian, the very spirit of Jesus Christ, that great king, the *spirit of glory*, as our apostle calls it below, ch. iv. This is a sure way to ennoble the basest and poorest among us. This royalty takes away all attainders, and leaves nothing of all that is passed to be laid to our charge, or to dishonor us.

Believers are not shut out from God, as they were before, but, being in Christ, are brought near unto him, and have free access to the throne of his grace, Heb. x. 21, 22. They resemble, in their spiritual state, the legal priesthood very clearly, I. In their consecration; II. In their service; and, III. In their laws of living.

I. In their consecration. The Levitical priests were, 1, washed; therefore this is expressed, Revel. i. 5, *He hath washed us in his blood*, and then follows, *and hath made us kings and priests.* There would have been no coming near unto God in his holy services as his priests, unless we had been cleansed from the guiltiness and pollution of our sins. This that pure and purifying blood doth: and it alone. No other laver can do it; no water but that *fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness.* Zech. xiii. 1. No blood, none of all that blood of legal sacrifices (Heb. ix. 12), but only the blood of that spotless Lamb that *takes away the sins of the world*, John i. 29. So with this, 2. We have that other ceremony of the priest's consecration, which was by sacrifice, as well as by washing; for Christ at once offered up himself as our sacrifice, and let out his blood for our washing. With good reason is that prefixed there, Rev. i. 5, *He hath loved us*, and then it follows, *washed us in his blood.* That precious stream of his heart-blood, that flowed for our washing, told clearly that it was a heart full of unspeakable love that was the source of it. 3. There is anointing, namely, the graces of the Spirit, conferred upon believers, flowing unto them from Christ. For *it is of his fulness that we all receive grace for grace* (John i. 16); and the Apostle St. Paul says (2 Cor. i. 16), that *we are established and anointed in Christ.* It was poured on him as our head, and runs down from him unto us; He the *Christ*, and we *Christians*, as partakers of his anointing. The consecrating oil of the priests was made of the richest ointments and spices to show the preciousness of the graces of God's Spirit, which are bestowed on these spiritual priests; and as that holy oil was not for common use, nor for any other persons to be anointed withal, save the priests only, so is the Spirit of grace a peculiar gift to believers. Others might have costly ointments among the Jews, but none of that same sort with the consecration-oil. Natural men may have very great gifts of judgment, and learning, and eloquence, and moral virtues, but they have none of this precious oil, namely, the Spirit of Christ communicated to them; no, all their endowments are but common and profane. That holy oil signified particularly, eminency of light and knowledge in the priests; therefore, in Christians there must be light. They

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that are grossly ignorant of spiritual things are surely not of this order; this anointing is said *to teach us all things*, 1 John ii. 27. That holy oil was of a most fragrant sweet smell, by reason of its precious composition; but much more sweet is the smell of that Spirit wherewith believers are anointed, those several odoriferous graces, which are the ingredients of their anointing oil, that heavenly-mindedness, and meekness, and patience, and humility, and the rest, that diffuse a pleasant scent into the places and societies where they come; their words, their actions, and their deportment smelling sweet of them. 4. The garments wherein the priests were inaugurate, and which they were after to wear in their services, are outshined by that purity and holiness wherewith all the saints are adorned; but still more by that imputed righteousness of Christ, *those pure robes* that are put upon them, wherein they appear before the Lord and are accepted in his sight. These priests are indeed *clothed with righteousness*, according to that of the Psalmist, Psal. cxxxii. 9. 5. The priests were to have the offerings put into their hands; thence, *filling of the hand*, signifies consecrating to the priesthood. And thus doth Jesus Christ, who is the consecrator of these priests, put into their hands, by his Spirit, the offerings they are to present unto God. He furnishes them with prayers, and praises, and all other oblations, that are to be offered by them; he gives them themselves, which they are to offer a living sacrifice, rescuing them from the usurped possession of Satan and sin.

Let us consider their services, which were divers. To name the chief, 1. They had charge of the sanctuary, and the vessels of it, and the lights, and were to keep the lamps burning. Thus the heart of every Christian is made a temple to the Holy Ghost, and he himself, as a priest consecrated unto God, is to keep it diligently, and the furniture of divine grace in it; to have the light of spiritual knowledge within him, and to nourish it by drawing continually new supplies from Jesus Christ. 2. The priests were to bless the people. And truly it is this spiritual priesthood, *the elect*, that procure blessings upon the rest of the world, and particularly on the places where they live. They are daily to offer the incense of prayer, and other spiritual sacrifices unto God, as the apostle expresseth it above, verse 5, not to neglect those holy exercises together or apart. And as the priests offered it not only for themselves, but for the people, so Christians are to extend their prayers, and to entreat the blessings of God for others, especially for the public estate of the church. As the Lord's priests, they are to offer up those praises to God that are his due from the other creatures, which praise him indeed, yet can not do it after the manner in which these priests do; therefore they are to offer, as it were, their sacrifices for them, as the priests did for the people. And because the most of men neglect to do this, and can not do it indeed because they are unholy, and are not of this priesthood, therefore should they be so much the more careful of it, and diligent in it. How few of those, whom the heavens call to by their light and revolution, that they enjoy, do offer that sacrifice which becomes them, by acknowledging *the glory of God which the heavens declare!* This, therefore, is as it were put into the hands of these priests, namely, the godly, to do.

III. Let us consider their course of life. We shall find rules given to the legal priests, stricter than to others, of avoiding legal pollutions, &c. And from these, this spiritual priesthood must learn an exact, holy conversation, keeping themselves from the pollutions of the world; as here it follows: *A holy nation*, and that of necessity; if a priesthood, then holy. They are purchased indeed to be *a peculiar treasure* to God, Exod. xix. 5, purchased at a very high rate. He spared not his only Son, nor did the Son spare himself; so that these priests ought to be the Lord's peculiar portion. All believers are his *clergy;* and as they are his portion, so he is theirs. The priests had no assigned inheritance among their brethren, and the reason is added, for *the Lord is their portion;* and truly so they needed not envy any of the rest, they had the choicest of all, the Lord of all. Whatsoever a Christian possesses in the world, yet, being of this spiritual priesthood, he is *as if he possessed it not*, 1 Cor. vii. 30, lays little account on it. That which his mind is set upon, is, how he may enjoy God, and find clear assurance that he hath him for his portion.

It is not so mean a thing to be a Christian as we think: it is a holy, an honorable, a happy state. Few of us can esteem it, or do labor to find it so. No, we know not these things, our hearts are not on them, to make this dignity and happiness sure to our souls. Where is that true greatness of mind, and that holiness to be found, that become those who are *kings* and *priests* unto God? that contempt of earthly things, and minding of heaven, that should be in such? But surely, as many as find themselves indeed partakers of these dignities, will study to live agreeably to them, and will not fail to love that Lord Jesus who hath purchased all this for them, and exalted them to it; yea, humbled himself to exalt them.

Now, as to the opposition of the estate of Christians to that of unbelievers. We best discern, and are most sensible of the evil or good of things by comparison. In respect of outward condition, how many be there that are vexing themselves with causeless murmurings and discontents, who, if they would look upon the many in the world that are in a far meaner condition than they, would be cured of that evil! It would make them not only content, but cheerful and thankful. But

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the difference here expressed, is far greater and more considerable than any that can be in outward things. Though the estate of a Christian is very excellent and precious, and, when rightly valued, hath enough in itself to commend it, yet it doth and ought to raise our esteem of it the higher, when we compare it both with the misery of our former condition, and with the continuing misery of those that abide still, and are left to perish in that woful estate. We have here both these parallels. The happiness and dignity to which they are chosen and called, are opposed to the rejection and misery of them that continue unbelievers and rejecters of Christ.

Not only natural men, but even they that have a spiritual life in them, when they forget themselves, are subject to look upon the things that are before them with a natural eye, and to think hardly, or at least doubtfully, concerning God's dispensations, beholding the flourishing and prosperities of the ungodly, together with their own sufferings and distresses. Thus, Psalm lxxxiii. But when they turn the other side of the medal, and view them with a right eye, and by a true light, they are no longer abused with those appearances. When they consider unbelievers *as strangers*, yea, *enemies to God*, and slaves to Satan, held fast in the chains of their own impenitency and unbelief, and by these bound over to eternal death, and then see themselves called to the liberties and dignities of the sons of God, partakers of the honor of the only-begotten Son, on whom they have believed, made by him *kings and priests unto God the Father*, then, surely, they have other thoughts. It makes them no more envy, but pity the ungodly, and account all their pomp, and all their possessions, what they are indeed, no other than a glistening misery, and account themselves happy in all estates. It makes them say with David, *The lines have fallen to me in a pleasant place, I have a goodly heritage.* It makes them digest all their sufferings and disgraces with patience, yea, with joy, and think more of praising than complaining, more of showing forth his honor who hath so honored them; especially when they consider the freeness of his grace, that it was that alone which made the difference, calling them altogether undeservedly from that same darkness and misery in which unbelievers are deservedly left.

Now the third thing here to be spoken to, is, the *end* of their calling, *to show forth his praise*, &c. And that we may the more prize the reasonableness of that happy estate to which God hath exalted them, it is expressed in other terms; which therefore we will first consider, and then the end.

To magnify the grace of God the more, we have here, 1. Both the terms of this motion or change—*whence* and *to what* it is; 2. The principle of it, the calling of God.

1. For the terms of this motion: *From darkness.* There is nothing more usual, not only in divine, but in human writings, than to borrow outward sensible things, to express things intellectual; and among such expressions there is none more frequent than that of *light* and *darkness* transferred, to signify the good and the evil estate of man, as sometimes for his outward prosperity or adversity, but especially for things proper to his mind. The mind is called *light*, because the seat of truth, and truth is most fitly called *light*, being the chief beauty and ornament of the rational world, as light is of the visible. And as the light, because of that its beauty, is a thing very refreshing and comfortable to them that behold it (as Solomon says, *It is a pleasant thing to see the sun*), so is truth a most delightful thing to the soul that rightly apprehends it.

This may help us to conceive of the spiritual sense in which it is here taken. The estate of lost mankind is indeed nothing but darkness, being destitute of all spiritual truth and comfort, and tending to utter and everlasting darkness.

And it is so, because by sin the soul is separate from God, who is the first and highest light, the primitive truth. As he is light in himself (as the Apostle St. John tells us, *God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all*, expressing the excellency and purity of his nature), so he is light relatively to the soul of man: *The Lord is my light*, says David, Psalm xxvii. 1.

And the soul being made capable of divine light, can not be happy without it. Give it what other light you will, still it is in darkness, so long as it is without God, he being the peculiar light and life of the soul. And as truth is united with the soul in apprehending it, and light with the visive faculty, so, in order that the soul may have God as its light, it must of necessity be in union with God. Now sin hath broken that union, and so cut off the soul from its light, and plunged it into spiritual darkness.

Hence all that confusion and disorder in the soul, which is ever the companion of darkness: *Tohu vabohu*, as it was at first, when *darkness was on the face of the deep*, Gen. i. 2. Being ignorant of God and ourselves, it follows that we love not God, *because we know him not;* yea (though we think it a hard word), we are *haters of God;* for not only doth our darkness import ignorance of him, but an enmity to him, because he is light, and we are darkness. And being ignorant of ourselves, not seeing our own vileness, because we are in the dark, we are pleased with ourselves, and having left God, do love ourselves instead of God. Hence arise all the wickednesses of our hearts and lives, which are no other than, instead of obeying and pleasing God, a continual sacrificing to those *gillulim*, those base dunghill-gods, our own lusts. For this, the Apostle

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Paul gives as the root of all evil dispositions, 2 Tim. iii. 2; because, in the first place, *lovers of themselves*, therefore *covetous, boasters, proud*, &c., and *lovers of pleasures more than of God*. And this self-love can not subsist without gross ignorance, by which our minds are so darkened that we can not withal see what we are; for if we did, it were not possible but we should be far of another mind, very far out of loving and liking with ourselves. Thus our souls being filled with darkness, are likewise full of uncleanness, as that goes along too with darkness; they are not only dark as dungeons, but withal filthy as dungeons used to be. So, Ephes. iv. 18. *Understandings darkened, alienated from the life of God;* and therefore, it is added, ver. 19, *they give themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.* Again, in this state they have no light of solid comfort. Our great comfort here, is not in anything present, but in hope; now, being *without Christ*, and *without God*, we are *without hope*. Ephes. ii. 12.

And as the estate whence we are called by grace is worthily called *darkness*, so that to which it calls us deserves as well the name of *light*. Christ, likewise, who came to work our deliverance, is frequently so called in scripture; as John i. 9, *That was the true light*, and elsewhere; not only in regard of his own nature, being God equal with the Father, and therefore light, as he is *God of God*, and therefore *light of light;* but relatively to men, as John i. 4, *That life was the light of men*. So he is styled *The Word*, and the *Wisdom of the Father*, not only in regard of his own knowledge, but as revealing him unto us. See John i. 18, and 1 Cor. i. 18, compared with v. 21. And he is styled by Malachi, ch. iv. 2 *the Sun of Righteousness*. Now, the sun is not only a luminous body, but a luminary, giving light unto the world. Gen. i. 15.

He is our *light*, opposed to all kind of darkness. He is so, in opposition to the dark shadows of the ceremonial law, which possibly are here meant, as part of that darkness from which the apostle writes that these Jews were delivered also by the knowledge of Christ: when he came, *the day broke and the shadows flew away*. He is our light, as opposed likewise to the darkness of the Gentile superstitions and idolatries; therefore these two are joined by old Simeon, *A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel*, Luke ii. 34. And to all who believe among either, he is light as opposed to the ignorance, slavery, and misery, of their natural estate, teaching them by his Spirit the things of God, and reuniting them with God, who is the light of the soul. *I am*, says he, *the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness*. John viii. 12.

And it is that mysterious union of the soul with God in Christ, which a natural man so little understands, that is the cause of all that spiritual light of grace, that a believer does enjoy. There is no right knowledge of God, to man once fallen from it, but in his Son; no comfort in beholding God, but through him; nothing but just anger and wrath to be seen in God's looks, but through him, *in whom he is well pleased*. The gospel shows us *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God*, but it is *in the face of Jesus Christ*. 2 Cor. iv. 6. Therefore, the kingdom of light, as opposed to that of darkness, is called *the kingdom of his dear Son*, or, the *Son of his love*. Col. i. 13.

There is a spirit of light and knowledge flows from Jesus Christ into the souls of believers, that acquaints them with the *mysteries of the kingdom of God*, which can not otherwise be known. And this spirit of knowledge is withal a spirit *of holiness;* for purity and holiness are likewise signified by this *light*. He removed that huge dark body of sin that was between us and the Father, and eclipsed him from us. The light of his countenance *sanctifieth by truth;* it is a light that hath heat with it, and hath influence upon the affections, warms them toward God and Divine things. This darkness here is indeed the shadow of death, and they that are without Christ, are said, till he visit them, *to sit in darkness and in the shadow of death*, Luke i. 79; so, this *Light* is *life*, John i. 4; it doth enlighten and enliven, begets new actions and motions in the soul. The right notion that a man hath of things as they are, works upon him, and stirs him accordingly; thus this light discovers a man to himself, and lets him see his own natural filthiness, makes him loath himself, and fly from himself—run out of himself. And the excellency he sees in God and his Son Jesus Christ, by this new light, inflames his heart with their love, fills him with estimation of the Lord Jesus, and makes the world, and all things in it that he esteemed before, base and mean in his eyes. Then from this light arise *spiritual joy* and *comfort*, which are frequently signified by this expression, as in that verse of the psalmist (the latter clause expounds the former), *Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart*. Psal. xcvii. 11. As this *kingdom of God's dear Son*, that is, this kingdom of *light*, hath righteousness in it, so it hath *peace and joy in the Holy Ghost*. Rom. xiv. 17. It is a false prejudice the world hath taken up against religion, that it is a sour melancholy thing: there is no truly lightsome comfortable life but it. All others, have they what they will, live in darkness: and is not that truly sad and comfortless? Would you think it a pleasant life, though you had fine clothes, and good diet, never to see the sun, but still to be kept in a dungeon with them? Thus are they who live in worldly honor and plenty, but still without God; they are in continual darkness, with all their enjoyments.

It is true the light of believers is not here

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perfect, and therefore neither is their joy perfect: it is sometimes overclouded; but the comfort is this, that it is an everlasting light, it shall never go out in darkness, as it is said in Job xviii. 5, *the light of the wicked shall;* and it shall within a while be perfected: there is a bright morning without a cloud that shall arise. The saints have not only light to lead them in their journey, but much purer light at home, *an inheritance in light.* Col. i. 12. The land where their inheritance lieth, is full of light, and their inheritance itself is light; for the vision of God for ever is that inheritance. That city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine in it, *for the glory of the Lord doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* Rev. xxi. 23. As we said, that Increated Light is the happiness of the soul, the beginnings of it are our happiness begun; they are beams of it sent from above, to lead us to the fountain and fulness of it. *With thee,* says David, *is the fountain of life, and in thy light shall we see light.* Psal. xxxvi. 9.

There are two things spoken of this Light, to commend it—*His marvellous light;* that it is after a peculiar manner *God's,* and then, that it is *marvellous.*

All light is from him, the light is sense, and that of reason; therefore he is called the *Father of lights,* James i. 17. But this *light of grace* is after a peculiar manner his, being a light above the reach of nature, infused into the soul in a supernatural way, the light of the elect world, where God specially and graciously resides. Natural men may know very much in natural things, and, it may be, may know much in supernatural things, after a natural manner. They may be full of school-divinity, and be able to discourse of God and his Son Christ, and the mystery of redemption, &c., and yet, they want this peculiar light, by which Christ is made known to believers. They may speak of him, but it is in the dark; they see him not, and therefore they love him not. The light they have is as the light of some things that shine only in the night, a cold glow-worm light that hath no heat with it at all. Whereas a soul that hath some of *this* light, God's peculiar light, communicated to it, sees Jesus Christ, and loves and delights in him, and walks with him. A little of this light is worth a great deal, yea, more worth than all that other common, speculative, and discoursing knowledge that the greatest doctors can attain unto. It is of a more excellent kind and original: it is from Heaven, and you know that one beam of the sun is of more worth than the light of ten thousand torches together. It is a pure, undecaying, heavenly light, whereas the other is gross and earthly (be it never so great), and lasts but a while. Let us not therefore think it incredible, that a poor unlettered Christian may know more of God in the best kind of knowledge, than any the wisest and most learned natural man can do; for the one knows God only by man's light, the other knows him by his own light, and that is the only right knowledge. As the sun can not be seen but by its own light, so neither can God be savingly known, but by his own revealing.

Now this light being so peculiarly *God's,* no wonder if it be *marvellous.* The common light of the world is so, though, because of of its commonness, we think not so of it. The Lord is marvellous in wisdom, and in power in all his works of creation and providence; but above all, in the workings of his grace. This light is unknown to the world, and so *marvellous* in the rareness of beholding it, that there be but a few that partake of it. And to them that see, it is *marvellous;* because in it they see so many excellent things that they knew not before; as if a man were born and brought up, till he came to the years of understanding, in a dungeon, where he had never seen light, and were brought forth on a sudden; or, not to need that imagination, take the man that was born blind, at his first sight, after Christ had cured him—what wonder, think we, would seize upon him, to behold on a sudden the beauty of this visible world, especially of that sun, and that light that makes it both visible and beautiful! But much more matter of admiration is there in this light, to the soul that is brought newly from the darkness of corrupt nature! Such persons see as it were a new world, and in it such wonders of the rich grace and love of God, such matchless worth in Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, that their souls are filled with admiration. And if this light of *grace* be so *marvellous,* how much more *marvellous* shall the light of *glory* be in which it ends!

Hence, 1. Learn to esteem highly of the gospel, in which this light shines unto us: the apostle calls it, therefore, *The glorious gospel,* 2 Cor. iv. 4. Surely we have no cause to be ashamed of it, but of ourselves, that we are so unlike it.

2. Think not, you who are grossly ignorant of God, and his Son Christ, and the mysteries of salvation, that you have any portion as yet in his grace; for the first character of his renewed image in the soul, as it was his first work in the material world, is light. What avails it us to live in the noonday light of the gospel, if our hearts be still shut against it, and so within we be nothing but darkness?—as a house that is close shut up, and hath no entry for light, though it is day without, still it is night within.

3. Consider your delight in the works of darkness, and be afraid of that great condemnation, *This is the condemnation of the world, that light is come into it, and men love darkness rather than light.* John iii. 19.

4. You that are indeed partakers of this happy change, let your hearts be habitations of light. *Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove*



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*them.* Eph. v. 11. Study much to increase in spiritual light and knowledge, and withal in holiness and obedience; if your light be this light of God, truly spiritual light, these will accompany it. Consider the rich love of God, and account his light *marvellous*, as in itself, so in this respect, that he hath bestowed it on you. And seeing *you were once darkness, but now are light in the Lord*, I beseech you—nay, the apostle, and in him the Spirit of God, beseeches you, *Walk as children of the light*, Eph. v. 8.

But to proceed to speak to the other parts of this verse, as to the principle of this change, *the calling of God.*

It is known and confessed to be a chief point of wisdom in a man, to consider what he is, from whom he hath that his being, and to what end. When a Christian hath thought on this in his natural being, as he is a man, he hath the same to consider over again of his spiritual being, as he is a Christian, and so a new creature. And in this notion, all the three are very clearly represented to him in these words: 1. What he is, first, by these titles of dignity in the first words of this verse; and again, by an estate of light in the last clause of it. 2. Whence a Christian hath this excellent being is very clearly expressed here, *He hath called you.* That God who is the author of all kind of being, hath given you this, *called you from darkness to his marvellous light.* If you be *a chosen generation*, it is he that hath *chosen. you* (ch. i. 2.) If you be a *royal priesthood*, you know that it is he that hath anointed you. If *a holy nation*, he hath sanctified you. (John xvii. 17.) If *a peculiar* or *purchased people*, it is he that hath bought you. (1 Cor. vi. 20.) All are included in this calling, and they are all one thing. 3. To what end—to *show forth his praises.* Of the first of these, in all the several expressions of it, we have spoken before; now are to be considered the other two.

*He hath called you.*] Those who live in the society, and profess the faith of Christians, are called unto *light*, the light of the gospel that shines in the church of God. Now this is no small favor and privilege, while many people are left in *darkness and in the shadow of death*, to have this light arise upon us, and to be in the region of it, the church, the *Goshen* of the world; for by this outward light we are invited to this happy state of saving inward light, and the former is here to be understood as the means of the latter. These Jews who were called to the profession of the Christian faith, to whom our apostle writes, were even in that respect called unto a light hidden from the rest of their nation, and from many other nations in the world; but because the apostle doth undoubtedly describe here the lively spiritual state of true believers, therefore this calling doth further import the effectual work of conversion, making the daylight of salvation, not only without, but within them, *the day-star to arise in their hearts*, as he speaks, 2 Eph. i. 19. When the sun is arisen, yet if a man be lying fast in a dark prison, and in a deep sleep too, it is not day to him; he is not *called to light*, till some one open the doors and awake him, and bring him forth to it. This God doth, in the calling here meant. That which is here termed *Calling*, in regard of the way of God's working with the soul, is, in regard of the power of it, called a *rescuing* and *bringing forth* of the soul: so the Apostle St. Paul speaks of it, Col. i. 13: *Delivered from the power of darkness, and translated to the kingdom of his dear Son.* That delivering and translating is this *calling*, and it is *from the power of darkness*—a forcible power—that detains the soul captive. As there are chains of eternal darkness upon damned spirits, which shall never be taken off, wherein they are *said to be reserved to the judgment of the great day*, so there are chains of spiritual darkness upon the unconverted soul, that can be taken off by no other hand but the powerful hand of God. He calls the sinner to *come forth*, and withal causes, by the power of that his voice, the bolts and fetters to fall off, and enables the soul to *come forth* into the light. It is an operative word that effects what it bids, as that in the creation, *He said, Let there be light, and it was light*, to which the apostle hath reference, 2 Cor. iv. 6, when he says, *God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into your hearts.* God calls man. He works with him indeed as with a reasonable creature, but surely he likewise works as himself, as an Almighty Creator. He works strongly and sweetly, with an almighty easiness. One man may call another to this light, and if there be no more, he may call long enough to no purpose; as they tell of Mohammed's miracle that misgave—he called a mountain to come to him, but it stirred not. But His call that shakes and removes the mountains, doth in a way known to himself, turn and wind the heart which way he pleaseth. *The voice of the Lord is powerful and full of majesty.* Psal. xxix. 4. If he speaks once to the heart, it can not choose but follow him, and yet most willingly chooses that. The workings of grace (as oil, to which it is often compared) do insensibly and silently penetrate and sink into the soul, and dilate themselves through it. That word of his own calling, disentangles the heart from all its nets, as it did the disciples from theirs, to follow Christ. That call which brought St. Matthew presently from his receipt of custom, puts off the heart from all its customs, and receipts too; makes it reject gains and pleasures, and all that hinders it, to go after Christ. And it is a call that touches the soul so as the touch of Elijah's mantle, that made Elisha follow him. *Go back*, said he, *for what have I done unto thee?* Yet he had done so much, as made him forsake all to go with him. 1 Kings xix. 20. And this every believer is most ready to

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acknowledge, who knows what the rebellion of his heart was, and what his miserable love of darkness was, that the gracious, yet mighty call of God, was what drew him out of it; and therefore he willingly assents to that which is the *Third* thing to be spoken of, that it becomes him, as being the End of his Calling, to *show forth his praise*, who hath so mercifully, and so powerfully, called him from so miserable to so happy an estate.

For 1. This is God's end in calling us, to communicate his goodness to us, that so the glory of it may return to himself. The highest agent can not work but for the highest end; so that, as the apostle speaks, when God would confirm his covenant by an oath, *he sware by himself*, because he could swear by no greater, so, in all things, he must be the end of his own actions, because there is no greater, nor better end, yea, none by infinite odds so great, or good. Particularly in the calling and exalting of a number of lost mankind to so great honor and happiness, both in designing that great work, and in performing it, he aims at the opening up and declaring of his *rich grace*, for the glory of it, as the Apostle St. Paul tells us, once and again, Ephes. i. 6, 12.

2. As this is God's end, it ought to be ours, and therefore ours because it is his. And for this very purpose, both here and elsewhere, are we put in mind of it, that we may be true to his end, and intend it with him. This is his purpose in calling us, and therefore it is our great duty, being so called—to declare his praises. All things and persons shall pay this tribute, even those who are most unwilling; but the happiness of his chosen is, that they are active in it, others are passive only. Whereas the rest have his praise wrested from them, they do declare it cheerfully, as the glorious angels do. As the gospel brings them glad tidings of peace from God, and declares to them that love and mercy that is in him, they smother it not, but answer it; they declare it, and set forth the glory of it, with their utmost power and skill.

There be in this two things, 1. Not only that they speak upon all occasions to the advantage of his grace, but that the frame of their actions be such as doth tend to the exalting of God. And 2. That in those actions they do intend this end, or set up this for their aim.

1. Their words and actions being conformable to that high and holy estate to which they are called, do commend and praise their Lord, who hath called them to it. The virtues which are in them, tell us of his virtues, as brooks lead us to their springs. When a Christian can quietly repose his trust on God, in a matter of very great difficulty, wherein there is no other thing to stay him, but God alone, this declares that there is strength enough in God that bears him up, that there must be in him that real abundance of goodness and truth that the word speaks of him. *Abraham believed, and gave glory to God* (Rom. iv. 20): this is what a believer can do, to declare the truth of God: he relies on it. *He that believes sets to his seal that God is true.* John iii. 33. So, also, their *holiness* is for his praise. Men hear that there is a God who is infinitely holy, but they can see neither him nor his holiness; yet, when they perceive some lineaments of it in the faces of his children, which are in no others, this may convince them that its perfection, which must be somewhere, can be nowhere else than in their heavenly Father. When these which are his peculiar plants, bring forth the fruits of holiness, which naturally they yielded not, it testifies a supernatural work of his hand who planted them, and the more they are fruitful, the greater is his praise. *Herein*, says our Savior, *is your heavenly Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit.* John xv. 8. Were it not for the conscience of this duty to God, and possibly the necessity of their station and calling, it may be, some Christian had rather altogether lock up and keep within himself any grace he hath, than let it appear at all, considering some hazards which he and it run in the discovery; and, it may be, could take some pleasure in the world's mistakes and disesteem of him. But seeing both piety and charity require the acting of graces in converse with men, that which hypocrisy doth for itself, a real Christian may and should do for God.

2. The other thing mentioned as making up this rule, will give the difference; that not only what we speak and do should be such as agrees with this end, but that so speaking and doing, our eye be upon this end; that all our Christian conversation be directly intended by us, not to cry up our own virtues, but to glorify God, and his virtues —*to declare his praises who hath called us.*

*Let your light*, says our Savior (Matt. v. 16) *shine*, and *shine before men* too: that is not forbidden; yea, it is commanded, but it is thus commanded, *Let your light so shine before men, that they seeing your good works* —yourselves as little as may be, your works more than yourselves (as the sun gives its light, and will scarce suffer us to look upon itself)—*may glorify*—Whom? You? No, but—*your Father which is in heaven. Let your light shine*, it is given for that purpose, but let it shine always to the glory of the *Father of lights.* Men that seek themselves, may share in the same public kind of actions with you; but let your secret intention (which God eyes most) sever you. This is the impress that a sincere and humble Christian sets upon all his actions, *to the glory of God.* He useth all he hath, especially all his graces, to his praise who gives all, and is sorry he hath no more for this use, and is daily seeking after more, not to bring more esteem to himself, but more honor to God. It is a poor booty to hunt after that, namely, an

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airy vain breath of men: the best things in them, their solidest good, is altogether vanity; how much more that which is lightest and vainest in them! This is the mind that is in every Christian, in all his ways to deny himself, and to be willing to abase himself to exalt his Master: to be of St Paul's temper, who regarded not himself at all, honor or dishonor, prison or liberty, life or death, content he was with anything, so *Christ might be magnified.* Phil. i. 20.

And as every godly mind must be thus affected, so especially the ministers of the gospel, they who are not only called with others to partake of this *marvellous light*, but are in a special manner to hold it forth to others. How do pure affections become them, and ardent desires to promote his glory who hath so called them! A rush for your praise or dispraise of us; only receive Jesus Christ, and esteem highly of him, and it is enough. *We preach not ourselves*, says the apostle, *but Christ Jesus the Lord.* 2 Cor. iv. 5. That is our errand, not to catch either at base gain or vain applause for ourselves, but to exalt our Lord Jesus in the hearts of men. And to those who are so minded, there is a reward abiding them, of such riches and honor as they would be very loath to exchange for anything to be had among men.

But, in his station, this is the mind of every one who loves the Lord Jesus, most heartily to make a sacrifice of himself, and all he is and hath—means, and esteem, and life, and all, to his glory who humbled himself so low, to exalt us to these dignities, to *make us kings and priests unto God.*

It is most just, seeing we have our crowns ftom him, and that he hath set them on our heads, that we take them in our hands, and throw them down *before his throne.* All our graces (if we have any) are his free gift, and are given as the rich garments of this spiritual priesthood, only to attire us suitably for this spiritual sacrifice of his praises; as the costly vesture of the high priest under the law was not appointed to make him gay for himself, but to decorate him for his holy service, and to commend, as a figure of it, the perfect holiness wherewith our great high priest, Jesus Christ was clothed. What good thing have we that is not from the hand of our good God? And receiving all from him, and after a special manner spiritual blessings, is it not reasonable that all we have, but those spiritual gifts especially, should declare his praise, and his only? David doth not grow big with vain thoughts, and lift him up himself, because God had lifted up, but exclaims, *I will extol thee, because thou hast lifted me up.* Psalm xxx. 1. The visible heavens, and all the beauty and the lights in them, speak nothing but his glory who framed them (as the psalmist teacheth us, Psalm xix. 1); and shall not these spiritual lights, *his called ones*, whom he hath made lights so peculiarly for that purpose, these *stars in his right hand*, do it much more? Oh! let it be thus with us! The more he gives, be still the more humble, and let him have the return of more glory, and let it go entire to him; it is all his due; and in doing thus, we shall still grow richer; for where he sees the most faithful servant, who purloins nothing, but improves all to his Master's advantage, surely, him he will trust with most.

And as it is thus both most due to God, and most profitable for ourselves, in all things to seek his praises, so it is the most excellent and generous intent, to have the same thought with God, the same purpose as his, and to aim no lower than at his glory: whereas it is a base poor thing for a man to seek himself far below that royal dignity that is here put upon Christians, and that priesthood joined with it. Under the law, those who were squint-eyed were incapable of the priesthood; truly, this squinting out to our own interest, the looking aside to that, in God's affairs especially, so deforms the face of the soul, that it makes it altogether unworthy the honor of this spiritual priesthood. Oh! this is a large task, an infinite task. The several creatures bear their part in this; the sun says somewhat, and moon and stars, yea, the lowest have some share in it; the very plants and herbs of the field, speak of God; and yet, the very highest and best, yea, all of them together, the whole concert of heaven and earth, can not show forth all his praise to the full. No; it is but a part, the smallest part of that glory which they can reach.

We all pretend to these dignities, in that we profess ourselves Christians; but if we have a mind to be resolved of the truth in this (for many, many are deceived in it!) we may, by asking ourselves seriously, and answering truly to these questions: 1*st*. Whether are my actions and the course of my life such as give evidence of the grace of God, and so speak his praise? If not, surely I am not of this number that God hath thus called and dignified. And this test I fear, would degrade many. 2*dly*. If my life be somewhat regular and Christian-like, yet, whether do I in it at all, singly and constantly without any selfish or sinister end, desire and seek the glory of God alone? Otherwise, I way be like this *chosen generation*, but I am not one of them. And this, out of doubt, would make the number yet far less. Well, think on it; it is a miserable condition, for men either to be grossly staining and dishonoring the holy religion they profess, or, in seeming to serve and honor God, to be serving and seeking themselves; it is the way to lose themselves forever. Oh! it is a comfortable thing to have an upright mind, and to love God for himself: and *love seeks not its own things.* 1 Cor. xiii. 5. They are truly happy, who make this their work sincerely, though weakly, to advance the praises of their God in all things, and who, finding the great imperfection of their best

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diligence in this work here, are still longing to be in that state where they shall do it better.

VER. 10. Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

THE love of God to his children is the great subject both of his word and of their thoughts, and therefore it is that his word (the rule of their thoughts and their whole lives) speaks so much of that love, to the very end that they may think much, and esteem highly of it, and walk answerably to it. This is the scope of St. Paul's doctrine to the Ephesians, and the top of his desires for them. See ch. iii. 17. And this is our apostle's aim here. As he began the epistle with opposing their election in heaven to their dispersion on earth, the same consideration runs through the whole of it. Here he is representing to them the great fruit of that love, the happy and high estate to which they are called in Christ; that the choosing of Christ and of believers is as one act, and they as one entire object of it—one glorious temple, he the foundation and head corner-stone, and they the edifice; one honorable fraternity, he the King of kings and great High Priest, and they likewise through him made kings and priests unto God the Father, *a royal priesthood;* he the *light of the world*, and they through him he *children of light*. Now that this their dignity, which shines so bright in its own innate worth, may yet appear the more, the apostle here sets it off by a double opposition, *first*, of the misery under which others are, and *secondly*, of that misery under which they themselves were before their calling. And this being set on both sides, is as a dark shadowing round about their happiness here described, setting off the lustre of it.

Their former misery, expressed in the former verse by *darkness*, is here more fully and plainly set before their view in these words. They are borrowed from the prophet Hosea, ch. ii. 23, where (as is usual with the prophets) he is raised up by the Spirit of God, from the temporal troubles and deliverances of the Israelites, to consider and foretell that great restoration wrought by Jesus Christ, in purchasing a new people to himself, made up both by Jews and Gentiles who believe; and therefore the prophecy is fit and applicable to both. So that the debate is altogether needless, whether it concerns the Jews or Gentiles; for in its spiritual sense, as relating to the kingdom of Christ, it foretells the making of the Gentiles, who were not before so, *the people of God*, and the recovery of the Jews likewise, who, by their apostacies, and the captivities and dispersions which came upon them as just punishment of those apostacies, were degraded from the outward dignities they had as the people of God, and withal were spiritually miserable and captives by nature, and so in both respects laid equal with the Gentiles, and stood as much in need of this restitution as they. St. Paul useth this passage concerning the calling of the Gentiles, Rom. ix. 25. And here, St. Peter writing, as is most probable, particularly to the dispersed Jews, applies it to them, as being, in the very reference it bears to the Jews, truly fulfilled in those alone who were believers, faith making them a part of the true Israel of God, to which the promises do peculiarly belong; as the Apostle St. Paul argues at large, in the ninth chapter of his epistle to the Romans.

Their former misery and their present happiness we have here under a double expression; they were, 1. *Not a people;* 2. *Destitute of mercy. Not the people of God*, says the prophet; *not a people*, says our apostle; being not God's people, they were so base and miserable as not to be worthy of the name of a people at all; as it is taken, Deut. xxxii. 21.

There is a kind of being, a life that a soul hath by a peculiar union with God, and, therefore, in that sense, the soul without God is dead, as the body is without the soul. Eph. ii. 1. Yea, as the body, separated from the soul, is not only a lifeless lump, but putrefies, and becomes noisome and abominable, thus the soul, separated from God, is subject to a more loathsome and vile putrefaction. See Psal. xiv. 3. So that men who are yet unbelievers, *are not*, as the Hebrews expressed. Multitudes of them *are not a people*, but a heap of filthy carcasses. Again; take our natural misery in the notion of a captivity, which was the judgment threatened against the Jews, to make them in this sense *not a people;* therefore their captivity is often spoken of by the prophets as a death, and their restoration as their resurrection, as Ezek. xxxvii. And as a captive people is civilly dead (as they speak), so a soul captive to sin and the Prince of Darkness is spiritually dead, wanting happiness and well-being, which if it never attain, it had better, for itself, not be at all. There is nothing but disorder and confusion in the soul without God, the affections hurrying it away tumultuously.

Thus captive sinners *are not; they are dead;* they want that happy being that flows from God to the souls which are united to himself, and, consequently, they must want that society and union one with another which results from the former, results from the same union that believers have with God, and the same being that they have in him; which makes them truly worthy to be called a people, and particularly the people of God. His people are the only people in the world worthy to be called *a people;* the rest are but refuse and dross. Although in the world's esteem, which judges by its own rules in favor of itself, the people of God be as no body, no people, a company of silly creatures; *yea, we are made*, says the great apostle, *as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all*

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*things*, 1 Cor. iv. 13; yet in his account who hath chosen them, who alone knows the true value of things, his people are the *only people*, and all the rest of the world as *nothing* in his eyes. He dignifies and beautifies them, and loves in them that beauty which he hath given them.

But under that term is comprised, not only that new being of believers in each one of them apart, but that tie and union that is among them as *one people*, being incorporated together, and living under the same government and laws, without which a people are but as the beasts of the field, or the *fishes of the sea, and the creeping things that have no ruler over them*, as the prophet speaks, Habak. i. 14. That regular living in society and union in laws and policy makes many men to be one people: but the civil union of men in states and kingdoms is nothing comparable to the mysterious union of the people of God with him, and one with another. That commonwealth hath a firmer union than all others. Believers are knit together in Christ as their head, not merely as a civil or political head ruling them, but as a natural head enlivening them, giving them all one life. Men in other societies, though well ordered, yet are but as a multitude of trees, regularly planted indeed, but each hath its own root; but the faithful are all branches of one root. Their union is so mysterious, that it is compared to the very union of Christ with his Father, as it is indeed the product of it. John xvii. 21.

*People of God.*] *I will say to them, Thou art my people, and they shall say, Thou art my God.* Hos. ii. 23. That mutual interest and possession is the very foundation of all our comfort. He is the first chooser; he first says, *My people;* calls them so, and makes them to be so; and then they say, *My God.* It is therefore a relation that shall hold, and shall not break, because it is founded upon his choice who changes not. The tenor of an external covenant with a people (as the Jews particularly found), is such as may be broken by man's unfaithfulness, though God remain faithful and true; but the new covenant of grace makes all sure on all hands, and can not be broken; the Lord not only keeping his own part, but likewise performing ours in us, and for us, and establishing us, that as he departs not from us first, so we shall not depart from him. *I will betroth thee to me for ever.* It is an indissoluble marriage that is not in danger of being broken either by divorce or death.

*My people.*] There is a treasure of instruction and comfort wrapped up in that word, not only more than the profane world can imagine (for they indeed know nothing at all of it), but more than they who are of the number of his people are able to conceive —a deep unfathomable. *My people;* they his portion, and he theirs! He accounts nothing of all the world beside them, and they of nothing at all beside him. For them he continues the world. Many and great are the privileges of his people, contained in that great charter, the holy scriptures, and rich is that land where their inheritance lies; but all is in this reciprocal, that *He is their God.* All his power and wisdom are engaged for their good. How great and many soever are their enemies, they may well oppose this to all, *He is their God.* They are sure to be protected and prospered, and in the end to have full victory. *Happy then is that people whose God is the Lord.*

*Which had not obtained mercy.*] *The mercies of the Lord* to his chosen *are from everlasting;* yet, so long as his decree of mercy runs hid, and is not discovered to them in the effects of it, they are said *not to have received*, or *obtained mercy.* When it begins to act and work in their effectual calling, then they find it to be theirs. It was in a secret way moving forward toward them before, as the sun after midnight is still coming nearer to us, though we perceive not its approach till the dawning of the day.

*Mercy.*] The former word, *the people of God*, teaches us how *great* the change is that is wrought by the calling of God: this teaches us, 1, how *free* it is. *The people of God*, that is the good attained in the change: *Obtained mercy*, that is the spring whence it flows. This is indeed implied in the words of the change; of *no people*—such as have no right to such a dignity at all, and in themselves no disposition for it—to be made *his people*, can be owing to nothing but free grace, such mercy as supposes nothing, and seeks nothing, but misery in us, and works upon that. As it is expressed to have been very free to this people of the Jews, in choosing them before the rest of the world, Deut. vii. 7, 8, so it is to the spiritual Israel of God, and to every one particularly belonging to that company. Why is it that he chooseth one of a family, and leaves another, but because it pleaseth him? *He blots out their transgressions for his own name's sake.* Isa. xliii. 25. And 2, as it is free mercy, so it is *tender mercy.* The word, in the prophets, signifies *tenderness*, or bowels of compassion; and such are the mercies of our God toward us. See Jer. xxxi. 20; the bowels of a father, as it is Psalm ciii. 13; and if you think not that tenderness enough, those of a mother, yea, more than a mother, Isa. xlix. 15. 3. It is *rich mercy;* it delights to glorify itself in the greatest misery; it pardons as easily the greatest as the smallest of debts. 4. It is a *constant, unalterable mercy*, a stream still running.

Now in both these expressions the apostle draws the eyes of believers to reflect on their former misery, and to view it together with their present state. This is very frequent in the scriptures. See Ezek. xvi.; Eph. xxi. 1; 1 Cor. vi. 11, &c. And it is of very great use; it works the soul of a Christian to much

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humility, and love, and thankfulness, and obedience. It can not choose but force him to abase himself, and to magnify the free grace and love of God. And this may be one reason why it pleaseth the Lord to suspend the conversion of some persons for many years of their life, yea, to suffer them to stain those years with grievous and gross sins, in order that the riches and glory of his grace, and the freeness of his choice, may be the more legible both to themselves and others. Likewise those apprehensions of wrath due to sin, and the sights of hell, as it were, which he brings some unto, either at or after their conversion, make for this same end. That glorious description of the *New Jerusalem*, Rev. xxi. 16, is abundantly delightful in itself; and yet, the fiery lake spoken of there makes all that is spoken of the other sound much the sweeter.

But, universally, all the godly have this to consider, that they *were strangers and enemies to God*, and to think, whence was it that I, a lump of the same polluted clay with those who perish, should be taken, and purified, and moulded by the Lord's own hand for a vessel of glory? Nothing but free grace makes the difference; and where can there be love, and praises, and service, found to answer this? All is to be ascribed to the mercy, gifts, and calling of Christ. And his ministers, with St. Paul, acknowledge that because they *have received mercy they faint not*. 2 Cor. iv. 1.

But alas! we neither enjoy the comfort of this mercy as obtained, nor are grieved for wanting it, nor stirred up to seek after it, if not yet obtained. What do we think? Seems it a small thing in your eyes to be shut out from the presence of God, and to bear the weight of his wrath for ever, that you thus slight his mercy, and let it pass by you unregarded? Or shall an imagined obtaining divert you from the real pursuit of it? Will you be willingly deceived, and be your own deceivers, in a matter of so great importance? You can not think too highly of the riches of divine mercy; it is above all your thoughts; but remember and consider this, that there is a *peculiar people* of his own, to whom alone all the riches of it do belong. And therefore, how great soever it is, unless you find yourselves of that number, you can not lay claim to the smallest share of it.

And you are not ignorant what is their character, what a kind of people they are, who have such a knowledge of God as himself gives. *They are all taught of God*, enlightened and sanctified by his Spirit, a holy people, as he is a holy God: such as have the riches of that grace by which they are saved, in most precious esteem, and have their hearts by it inflamed with his love, and therefore their thoughts taken up with nothing so much as studying how they may obey and honor him; rather choosing to displease all the world than offend him, and accounting nothing too dear, yea, nothing good enough to do him service. If it be thus with you, then you have indeed *obtained mercy*.

But if you be such as can wallow in the same puddle with the profane world, and take a share of their ungodly ways, or if, though your outward carriage be somewhat more smooth, you *regard iniquity in your hearts*, have your hearts ardent in the love and pursuit of the world, but frozen to God; if you have some bosom idol that you hide and entertain, and can not find in your heart to part with some one beloved sin, whatsoever it is, for all the love that God hath manifested to man in the *Son of his love Jesus Christ*; in a word, if you can please and delight yourself in any way displeasing unto God (though his people, while they are here, have spots, yet these are not the spots of his people that I am now speaking of), I can give you no assurance that as yet you have obtained mercy: on the contrary, it is certain that *the wrath of God is yet abiding on you*, and if you continue in this state, you are in apparent danger of perishing under it. You are yet children of spiritual darkness, and in the way to utter and everlasting darkness. Know ye what it is to be destitute of this mercy? It is a woful state, though you had all worldly enjoyments, and were at the top of outward prosperity, to be shut out from the mercy and love of God.

There is nothing doth so kindly work repentance, as the right apprehension of the mercy and love of God. The beams of that love are more powerful to melt the heart than all the flames of Mount Sinai—all the threatenings and terrors of the law. Sin is the root of our misery; and therefore it is the proper work of this mercy, to rescue the soul from it, both from the guilt and the power of it at once. Can you think there is any suitableness in it, that the peculiar people of God should despise his laws, and practise nothing but rebellions? that those in whom he hath magnified his mercy, should take pleasure in abusing it? or that he hath washed any with the blood of his Son, to the end that they may still *wallow again in the mire?* As if we were redeemed not *from* sin, but *to* sin; as if we should say, *We are delivered to do all these abominations*, as the prophet speaks, Jer. vii. 10. Oh! let us not dare thus abuse and affront the free grace of God, if we mean to be saved by it; but let as many as would be found among those that obtain mercy walk as his people, whose peculiar inheritance is his mercy. And seeing this *grace of God hath appeared unto us*, let us embrace it, and let it effectually *teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts*. Tit. ii. 11, 12.

And if you be persuaded to be earnest suiters for this mercy, and to fly unto Jesus, who is the *true mercy-seat*, then be assured it is yours. Let not the greatest guiltiness scare you and drive you from it, but rather drive you the more to it; for the greater the weight of that misery is under which you lie, the more need

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you have of this mercy, and the more will be the glory of it in you. It is a strange kind of argument used by the psalmist, and yet a sure one,—it concludes well and strongly, Psal. xxv. 7: *Lord pardon my iniquity, for it is great.* The soul oppressed with the greatness of its sin lying heavy upon it, may, by that very greatness of it pressing upon it, urge the forgiveness of it at the hands of free mercy. It is *for thy name's sake,*—that makes it strong; the force of the inference lies in that. Thou art nothing, and worse than nothing? True; but all that ever obtained this mercy were once so; they were *nothing* of all that which it hath made them to be; they were *not a people*, had no interest in God, were strangers to mercy, yea, *heirs of wrath;* yea, they had not so much of a desire after God, until this mercy prevented them, and showed itself to them, and them to themselves, and so moved them to desire it, and caused them to find it, caught hold on them and plucked them out of the dungeon. And it is unquestionably still the same mercy, and fails not; ever expending, and yet never all spent, yea, not so much as at all diminished; flowing, as the rivers, from one age to another, serving each age in the present, and yet no whit the less to those that come after. He who exercises it is *The Lord, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin,* to all that come unto him, and yet, still *keeping mercy for thousands* that come after.

You have obtained this mercy, and have the seal of it within you, it will certainly conform your hearts to its own nature; it will work you to a merciful compassionate temper of mind to the souls of others who have not yet obtained it. You will indeed, as the Lord doth, hate sin; but, as he doth, likewise, you will pity the sinner. You will be so far from misconstruing and grumbling at the long suffering of God (as if you would have the bridge cut because you are over, as St. Augustine speaks), that, on the contrary, your great desire will be to draw others to partake of the same mercy with you, knowing it to be rich enough; and you will, in your station, use your best diligence to bring in many to it, from love both to the souls of men and to the glory of God.

And withal, you will be still admiring and extolling this mercy, as it is manifested unto yourselves, considering what it is, and what you were before it visited you. The Israelites confessed (at the offering of the first fruits), to set off the bounty of God, *A Syrian ready to perish was my father;* they confessed their captivity in Egypt: but far poorer and baser is our natural condition, and far more precious is that land, to the possession of which this free mercy bringeth us.

Do but call back your thoughts, you that have indeed escaped it, and look but into that pit of misery whence the hand of the Lord hath drawn you out, and you can not fail to love him highly, and still kiss that gracious hand, even while it is scourging you with any affliction whatsoever; because it hath once done this for you, namely, plucked you out of everlasting destruction. So David, Psal. xl. 23, as the thoughts of this change will teach us to praise, *He hath brought me up out of a horrible pit:* then follows—*He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God;* not only *redeemed me from destruction*, but withal *crowned me with glory and honor.* Psal. ciii. 4. He not only doth forgive all our debts, and let us out of prison, but enriches us with an estate that can not be spent, and dignifies us with a crown that can not wither, made up of nothing of ours. These two considerations will stretch and tune the heart very high, namely, from what a low estate grace brings a man, and how high it doth exalt him; in what a beggarly, vile condition the Lord finds us, and yet, that he doth not only free us thence, but puts such dignities on us. *He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people.* Psal. cxiii. 7. Or, as Joshua the priest was stripped of his filthy garments, and had a fair mitre set upon his head (Zech. iii. 3–5), so, those of this priesthood are dealt withal.

Now, that we may be the deeper in the sense and admiration of this mercy, it is indeed our duty to seek earnestly after the evidence and strong assurance of it; for things work on us according to our notice and apprehension of them, and therefore, the more right assurance we have of mercy, the more love, and thankfulness, and obedience, will spring from it. Therefore it is, that the apostle here represents this great and happy change of estate to Christians as a thing that they may know concerning themselves, and that they ought to seek the knowledge of, that so they may be duly affected with it. And it is indeed a happy thing, to have in the soul an extract of that great archive and act of grace toward it, that hath stood in heaven from eternity. It is surely both a very comfortable and very profitable thing to find and to read clearly the seal of mercy upon the soul, which is holiness, that by which a man is marked by God, as a part of his peculiar possession that he hath chosen out of the world. And when we perceive anything of this, let us look back, as here the apostle would have us to do, and reflect how God has *called us from darkness to his marvellous light.*

VER. 11. Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.

THE right spiritual knowledge that a Christian hath of God and of himself, differenceth itself from whatsoever is likest to it, by the power and influence it hath upon the heart and life. And in this, it hath the lively impression of that doctrine of the Holy Scriptures, that teaches it; wherein we still find

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throughout, that the high mysteries of religion are accompanied with practical truths, which not only agree with them, but are drawn out of them, and not violently drawn, but naturally flowing from them, as pure streams from a pure spring. Thus, in this epistle, we find the apostle intermixing his divine doctrine with most useful and practical exhortations, ch. i. 13, 22: and in the beginning of this chapter again: and now, in these words.

And upon this model ought both the ministers of the gospel to form their preaching, and the hearers their ear. Ministers are not to instruct only, but do both. To exhort men to holiness and the duties of a Christian life, without instructing them in the doctrine of faith, and bringing them to Jesus Christ, is to build a house without a foundation. And, on the other side, to instruct the mind in the knowledge of Divine things, and neglect the pressing of that practice and power of godliness, which is the undivided companion of true faith, is to forget the building that ought to be raised upon that foundation once laid, which is likewise a point of very great folly. Or, if men, after laying that right foundation, do proceed to the superstructure of vain and empty speculations, it is but to *build hay and stubble*, instead of those solid truths that direct the soul in the way to happiness, which are of more solidity and worth than *gold and silver, and precious stones.* 1 Cor. iii. 12. Christ, and the doctrine that reveals him, is called by St. Paul, *the mystery of the faith*, 1 Tim. iii. 9, and ver. 16, *the mystery of godliness:* as Christ is the object of faith, so is he the spring and fountain of godliness. The apostle having, we see, in his foregoing discourse unfolded the excellency of Christ in him, proceeds here to exhort them to that pure and spiritual temper of mind and course of life that becomes them as Christians.

Those hearers are to blame, and do prejudice themselves, who are attentive only to such words and discourses as stir the affections for the present, and find no relish in the doctrine of faith, and the unfolding of those mysteries that bear the whole weight of religion, being the ground both of all Christian obedience, and all exhortations and persuasives to it. Those temporary, sudden stirrings of the affections, without a rightly informed mind, and some measure of due knowledge of God in Christ, do no good. It is the wind of a word of exhortation that stirs them for the time against their lusts, but the first wind of temptation that comes carries them away; and thus the mind is but tossed to and fro, like a wave of the sea, with all kinds of winds, not being *rooted and grounded in the faith of Christ* (as it is Col. ii. 7), and so, not *rooted in the love of Christ* (Eph. iii. 17), which are the conquering graces that subdue unto a Christian his lusts and the world. See 1 John v. 4; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. Love makes a man to be dead to himself, and to the world, and to *live to Christ who died for him.* On the other part, they are no less, yea, more to blame, who are glad to have their minds instructed in the mysteries of the Christian faith, and out of a natural desire to know, are curious to hear such things as inform them; but when it comes to the urging of holiness and mortifying their lusts, *these are hard sayings*—they had rather there were some way to receive Christ and retain their lusts too, and to bring them to agreement. To hear of the mercies of God, and the dignities of his people in Christ, is very pleasing; but to have this follow upon it, *Abstain from fleshly lusts*, this is an importune troublesome discourse. But it must be so for all that: those who will share in that mercy and happiness must *abstain from fleshly lusts.*

*Dearly beloved, I beseech you.*] There is a faculty of reproving required in the ministry, and sometimes a necessity of very sharp rebukes—cutting ones. They who have much of the *spirit of meekness*, may have *a rod* by them too, to use upon necessity. 1 Cor. iv. 21. But surely the way of meekness is that they use most willingly, as the apostle there implies; and out of all question, with ingenuous minds, the mild way of sweet entreaties is very forcible; as oil that penetrates and sinks in insensibly, or (to use that known resemblance) they prevail as the sun-beams, which, without any noise, made the traveller cast his cloak, which all the blustering of the wind could not do, but made him rather gather it closer, and bind it faster about him. We see the apostles are frequent in this strain of entreaties, *I beseech you*, as Rom. xii. 1. Now this word of entreaty is strengthened much by the other, *Dearly beloved.* Scarcely can the harshest reproofs, much less gentle reproofs, be thrown back, that have upon them the stamp of love. That which is known to come from love can not readily but be so received too. And it is thus expressed for that very purpose, that the request may be the more welcome: *Beloved.* It is the advice of a friend, one that truly loves you, and aims at nothing in it but your good. It is because I love you, that I entreat you, and entreat you as you love yourselves, *to abstain from fleshly lusts that war war against your souls.* And what is our purpose when we exhort you to believe and repent, but that you may be happy in the forgiveness of your sins? Why do we desire you to embrace Christ, but that through him ye may have everlasting life? Howsoever you take these things, it is our duty incessantly to put you in mind of them; and to do it with much love and tenderness of affection to your souls; not only pressing you by frequent warnings and exhortings, but also by frequent prayers and tears for your salvation.

*Abstain.*] It was a very wise abridgment that Epictetus made of philosophy, into those two words, *Bear and forbear.* These are truly the two main duties that our apostle



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recommends to his Christian brethren in this epistle. It is one and the same strength of spirit, that raises a man above both the troubles and pleasures of the world, and makes him despise and trample upon both.

We have first, briefly to explain what these *fleshly lusts* mean; then to consider the exhortation of *abstaining* from them.

Unchaste desires are particularly called by this name indeed, but to take it for these only in this place, is doubtless too narrow. That which seems to be the true sense of it here, takes in all undue desires and use of earthly things, and all the corrupt affections of our carnal minds.

Now in that sense, these *fleshly lusts* comprehend a great part of the body of sin. All those three which St. John speaks of, 1 Epis. ii. 16, the world's accursed trinity, are included under this name here of *fleshly lusts*. A crew of base, imperious masters they are, to which the natural man is a slave, *serving divers lusts*. Tit. iii. 3. Some are more addicted to the service of one kind of lust, some to that of another; but all are in this unhappy, that they are strangers, yea, enemies to God, and, as the brute creatures, servants to their flesh;—either covetous, like the beasts of the field, with their eyes still upon the earth, or voluptuous, swimming in pleasures, as fishes in the sea, or like the fowls of the air, soaring in vain ambition. All the *strifes* that are raised about these things, all *malice* and *envyings*, all *bitterness* and *evil-speaking* (Eph. iv. 31), which are *works of the flesh*, and tend to the satisfying of its wicked desires, we are here entreated to abstain from.

To abstain from these lusts is to hate and fly from the very thoughts and first motions of them: and if surprised by these, yet to kill them there, that they bring not forth; and to suspect ourselves even in those things that are not sinful, and to keep afar off from all inducements to those polluted ways of sin.

In a word, we are to abstain not only from the serving of our flesh in things forbidden, as unjust gain or unlawful pleasures, but also from immoderate desire of, and delighting in, any earthly thing, although it may be in itself lawfully, yea, necessarily in some degree, desired and used. Yea, to have any feverish, pressing thirst after gain, even just gain, or after earthly delights, though lawful, is to be guilty of those fleshly lusts, and a thing very unbeseeming the dignity of a Christian. To see them that are *clothed in scarlet embracing a dunghill* (Lam. iv. 4) is a strange sight. Therefore the apostle having so cleared that immediately before, hath the better reason to require this of them, that they *abstain from fleshly lusts*.

Let their own slaves serve them: you are redeemed and delivered from them, a free people, yea, kings; and suits it with royal dignity to obey vile lusts? You are priests consecrated to God, and will you tumble yourselves and your precious garments in the mire? It was a high speech of a heathen, *That he was greater, and born to greater things, than to be a servant to his body.* How much more ought he that is born again to say so, being born heir to *a crown that fadeth not away!*

Again, as the honor of a Christian's estate is far above this baseness of serving his lusts, so the happiness and pleasantness of his estate set him above the need of the pleasures of sin. The apostle said before, *If ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious desire the sincere milk of the word*—desire that word wherein ye may taste more of his graciousness. And as that exhortation fitly urgeth the appetite's desire of the word, so it strongly persuades to this abstinence from fleshly lusts, yea, to the disdain and loathing of them. If you have the least experience of the sweetness of his love, if you have but tasted of the crystal river of his pleasures, the muddy puddle-pleasures of sin will be hateful and loathsome to you; yea, the very best earthly delights will be disrelished, and will seem unsavory to your taste. The embittering of the breasts of the world to the godly by afflictions doth something indeed toward weaning them from them; but the *breasts of consolation* that are given them in their stead wean much more effectually.

The true reason why we remain servants to these lusts, some to one, some to another, is, because we are still strangers to the love of God, and those pure pleasures that are in him. Though the pleasures of the earth be poor and low, and most unworthy our pursuit, yet so long as men know no better, they will stick by those they have, such as they are. The philosopher gives this as the reason why men are so much set upon sensual delights, because they know not the higher pleasures that are proper to the soul; and they must have it some way. It is too often in vain to speak to men in this strain, to follow them with the apostle's entreaty, *I beseech you, abstain from fleshly lusts*, unless they who are spoken to be such as he speaks of in the former words, such as *have obtained mercy*, and *have tasted of the graciousness* and love of Christ, *whose loves are better than wine.* Cant. i. 2. Oh that we would seek the knowledge of this love! for, *seeking* it, we *should find it;* and finding it, there would need no force to pull the delights of sin out of our hands; we should throw them away of our own accord.

Thus a carnal mind prejudices itself against religion, when it hears that it requires an abstinence from fleshly lusts, and bereaves men of their mirth and delight in sin; but they know not that it is to make way for more refined and precious delights. There is nothing of this kind taken from us, but by a very advantageous exchange it is made up. *In the world ye shall have affliction, but in me ye shall have peace.* Is not want of the world's peace abundantly paid with peace in Christ?

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Thus, fleshly lusts are cast out of the hearts of believers as rubbish and trash, to make room for spiritual comforts. We are barred *fellowship* with *the unfruitful works of darkness*, to the end that *we may have fellowship with God and his Son Jesus Christ*, 1 John i. 3, 7. This is to make men *eat angels' food* indeed, as was said of the manna. The serving of the flesh sets man below himself, down among the beasts; but the consolations of the Spirit, and communion with God, raise him above himself and associate him with the angels. But let us speak to the apostle's own dissuasives from these lusts, taken, 1. From the condition of Christians; 2. From the condition of those lusts.

1. From the condition of Christians: *As strangers.* These dispersed Jews were strangers scattered in divers countries, ch. i. 1, but that is not intended here; they are called strangers in that spiritual sense which applies in common to all the saints. Possibly, in calling them thus, he alludes to the outward dispersion, but means, by the allusion, to express their spiritual alienation from the world, and interest in the New Jerusalem.

And this he uses as a very pertinent enforcement of his exhortation. Whatsoever others do, the serving of the flesh and love of the world are most incongruous and unseemly in you. Consider what you are. If you were citizens of this world, then you might drive the same trade with them, and follow the same lusts; but seeing you are chosen and called out of this world, and invested into a new society, made free of another city, and are therefore here but travellers passing through to your own country, it is very reasonable that there be this difference between you and the world, and while they live as at home, your carriage be such as becomes strangers; not glutting yourselves with their pleasures, not surfeiting upon their delicious fruits, as some unwary travellers do abroad, but as wise strangers, living warily and soberly, and still minding most of all your journey homeward, suspecting dangers and snares in your way, and so walking with holy fear (as the Hebrew word for *stranger* imports).

There is, indeed, a miserable party even within a Christian—the remainder of corruption—that is no *stranger* here, and therefore keeps friendship and correspondence with the world, and will readily betray him if he watch not the more. So that he is not only to fly *the pollutions of the world* that are round about him, and to choose his steps that he be not ensnared from without, but he is to be upon a continual guard against the lusts and corruption that are yet within himself, to curb and control them, and give them resolute and flat refusals when they solicit him, and to stop up their essays and opportunities of intercourse with the world, and such things as nourish them, and so to do what he can to starve them out of the holds they keep within him, and to strengthen that new nature which is in him; to live and act according to it, though, in doing so, he shall be sure to live as a stranger here, and a despised, mocked, and hated stranger.

And it is not, on the whole, the worse that it should be so. If men in foreign countries be subject to forget their own at any time, it is surely when they are most kindly used abroad, and are most at their ease; and thus a Christian may be in some danger when he is best accommodated, and hath most of the smiles and caresses of the world; so that though he can never wholly forget his home that is above, yet his thoughts of it will be less frequent, and his desires of it less earnest, and, it may be, he may insensibly slide into its customs and habits, as men will do that are well seated in some other country. But by the troubles and unfriendliness of the world he gains this, that when they abound most upon him he then feels himself a stranger, and remembers to behave as such, and thinks often with much delight and strong desires on his own country, and the rich and sure inheritance that lies there, and the ease and rest he shall have when he comes thither.

And this will persuade him strongly to fly all polluted ways and lusts as fast as the world follows them. It will make him abhor *the pleasures of sin*, and use the allowable enjoyments of this earth warily and moderately, never engaging his heart to them as worldlings do, but always keeping that free—free from that earnest desire in the pursuit of worldly things, and that deep delight in the enjoyment of them, which the men of the earth bestow upon them. There is a diligence in his calling, and a prudent regard of his affairs, not only permitted to a Christian, but required of him. But yet, in comparison of his great and *high calling* (as the apostle terms it), he follows all his other business with a kind of coldness and indifferency, as not caring very much which way they go; his heart is elsewhere. The traveller provides himself as he can with entertainment and lodgings where he comes; if it be commodious, it is well; but if not, it is no great matter. If he find but necessaries, he can abate delicacies very well; for where he finds them in his way, he neither can, nor if he could, would choose to stay there. Though his inn were dressed with the richest hangings and furniture, yet it is not his home; he must and would leave it. This is the character of ungodly men, *they mind earthly things*, Phil. iii. 19; they are drowned in them over head and ears, as we say.

If Christians would consider how little, and for how little a while, they are concerned in anything here, they would go through any state and any changes of state, either to the better or the worse, with very composed, equal minds, always moderate in their necessary cares, and never taking any care at all for the flesh, *to fulfil the lusts of it.* Rom. xiii. 14.

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Let them that have no better home than this world to lay claim to, live here as at home, and serve their lusts; they that have all *their portion in this life*—no more good to look for than what they can catch here—let them take their time of the poor profits and pleasures that are here; but you that have your whole estate, all your riches and pleasures, laid up in heaven, and *reserved* there *for you*, let your hearts be there, and your *conversation* there. This is not the place of your rest, nor of your delights, unless you would be willing to change, and to have *your good things here*, as some foolish travellers, who spend the estate they should live on at home, in a little while, braving it abroad among strangers. Will you, with *profane Esau, sell your birthright for a mess of pottage*—sell eternity for a moment, and, for a moment, sell such pleasures as a moment of them is more worth than an eternity of the other?

2. The apostle argues from the condition of those lusts. It were quarrel enough against *fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*, that they are so far below the soul, that they can not content, no, nor at all reach the soul; they are not a suitable, much less a satisfying good to it. Although sin hath unspeakably abused the soul of man, yet its excellent nature and original does still cause a vast disproportion between it and all those gross base things of the earth which concern the flesh, and go no further. But this is not all: these fleshly lusts are not only of no benefit to the soul, but they are its pernicious enemies—*they war against it*. And their war against it is all made up of stratagem and sleight; for they can not hurt the soul but by itself. They promise it some contentment, and so gain its consent to serve them, and undo itself. They embrace the soul that they may strangle it. The soul is too much diverted from its own proper business by the inevitable and incessant necessities of the body; and therefore it is the height of injustice and cruelty to make it likewise serve the extravagant and sinful desires of the flesh: so much time for sleep, and so much for eating and drinking, and dressing and undressing; and by many, the greatest part of the time that remains, is spent in laboring and providing for these. Look on the employments of most men: all the labor of the husbandmen in the country, and of the tradesmen in the city, the multitude of shops and callings, what is the end of them all, but the interest and service of the body? And in all these the immortal soul is drawn down to drudge for the mortal body, the house of clay wherein it dwells. And in the sense of this, those souls that truly know and consider themselves in this condition, do often groan under the burden, and desire the day of their deliverance. But the service of the flesh in the *inordinate lusts* of it is a point of far baser slavery and indignity to the soul, and doth not only divert it from spiritual things for the time, but habitually indisposes it to every spiritual work, and makes it earthly and sensual, and so unfits it for heavenly things. Where these lusts, or any one of them, have dominion, the soul can not at all perform any good; can neither pray, nor hear, nor read the word aright; and in so far as any of them prevail upon the soul of a child of God, they do disjoint and disable it for holy things. Although they be not of the grossest kind of lusts, but such things as are scarcely taken notice of in a man, either by others or by his own conscience, some irregular desires or entanglements of the heart, yet, *these little foxes will destroy the vines* (Cant. ii. 15); they will prey upon the graces of a Christian, and keep them very low. Therefore it concerns us much to study our hearts, and to be exact in calling to account the several affections that are in them; otherwise, even such as *are called of God*, and *have obtained mercy* (for such the apostle speaks to), may have such lusts within them as will much abate the flourishing of their graces and the spiritual beauty of the soul.

The godly know it well in their sad experience, that their own hearts do often deceive them, harboring and hiding such things as deprive them much of that liveliness of grace, and those comforts of the Holy Ghost, that otherwise they would be very likely to attain unto.

This *warring against the soul*, which means their mischievous and hurtful nature, hath this also included under it, that these lusts, as breaches of God's law, do subject the soul to his wrath. So that by this, the apostle might well urge his point, "Besides that these lusts are unworthy of you, the truth is, if you Christians serve your lusts, you kill your souls." So Rom. viii. 13.

Consider, when men are on their deathbeds, and near their entering into eternity, what they then think of all their toiling in the earth, and serving of their own hearts and lusts in any kind; when they see that of all these ways nothing remains to them but the guiltiness of their sin, and the accusations of conscience, and the wrath of God.

Oh! that you would be persuaded to esteem your precious souls, and not wound them as you do, but war for them, against all those lusts that war against them. The soul of a Christian is doubly precious, being, beside its natural excellency, ennobled by grace, and so twice descended of Heaven: and therefore it deserves better usage than to be turned into a scullion to serve the flesh. The service of Jesus Christ is that which alone is fitting to it: it is alone honorable for the soul to serve so high a lord, and its service is due only to him who bought it at so high a rate.

VER. 12. **Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may, by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.**

THESE two things that a natural man makes

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least account of, are of all things in highest regard with a Christian, his own soul and God's glory: so that there be no stronger persuasives to him in anything than the interest of these two. And by these the apostle urgeth his present exhortation to holiness and blamelessness of life. For the substance of his advice or request in this and the former verse is the same: a truly *honest conversation* is that only which is spiritual, not defiled with *the carnal lusts and pollutions of the world.*

The abstaining from those lusts doth indeed comprehend, not only the rule of outward carriage, but the inward temper of the mind; whereas this *honest conversation* doth more expressly concern our external deportment among men; as it is added, *honest among the Gentiles,* and so tending to the glory of God. So that these two are inseparably to be regarded, the inward disposition of our hearts, and the outward conversation and course of our lives.

I shall speak to the former first, as the spring of the latter. *Keep thine heart with all diligence,*—all depends upon that—*for thence are the issues of life.* Prov. iv. 23. And if so, then the regulating of the tongue, and eyes, and feet, and all will follow, as there it follows, v. 24: *Put away from thee a froward mouth.* That the impure streams may cease from running, the corrupt spring must be dried up. Men may convey them in a close and concealed manner, making them run, as it were under ground, as they do filth under vaults and in ditches (*sentinas et cloacas*); but till the heart be renewed and purged from base lusts it will still be sending forth, some way or other, the streams of iniquity. *As a fountain swelleth out,* or casteth forth her waters incessantly, *so she casteth out her wickedness,* says the prophet, of that very people and city that were called *holy,* by reason of the ordinances of God and the profession of the true religion that were among them: and therefore it is the same prophet's advice from the Lord, *Wash thine heart, O Jerusalem. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?* Jer. vi. 7, and iv. 14.

This is the true method according to our Savior's doctrine: *make the tree good, and then the fruits will be good;* not till then; for *who can gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?* Matt. vii. 16, 17. Some good outward actions avail nothing, the soul being unrenewed; as you may stick some figs, or hang some clusters of grapes, upon a thorn-bush, but they can not grow upon it.

In this men deceive themselves, even such as have some thoughts of amendment; when they fall into sin, and are reproved for it, they say (and possibly think so too), "I will take heed to myself, I will be guilty of this no more." And because they go no deeper, they are many of them ensnared in the same kind again; but however, if they do never commit that same sin, they do but change it for some other: as a current of waters, if you stop their passage one way, they rest not till they find another. The conversation can never be uniformly and entirely good till the frame of the heart, the affections and desires that lodge in it, be changed. It is naturally *an evil treasure* of impure lusts, and must in some way vent and spend what it hath within. It is to begin with the wrong end of your work, to rectify the outside first, to smooth the conversation, and not first of all purge the heart. Evil affections are the source of evil speeches and actions. *Whence are strifes and fightings?* says St. James; *Are they not from your lusts which war in your members?* James iv. 1. Unquiet, unruly lusts within, are the cause of the unquietnesses and contentions abroad in the world. One man will have his corrupt will, and another his, and thus they shock and justle one another; and by the cross encounters of their purposes, as flints meeting, they strike out those sparks that set all on fire.

So then, according to the order of the apostle's exhortation, the only true principle of all good and Christian conversation in the world is the mortifying of all earthly and sinful lusts in the heart. While they have possession of the heart, they do so clog it, and straiten it toward God and his ways, that it can not walk constantly in them; but when the heart is freed from them, it is enlarged, and so, as David speaks, the man is fitted, not only to walk, but to *run the way of God's commandments.* Psalm cxix. 32. And without this *freeing of the heart,* a man will be at the best very uneven and incongruous in his ways,—in one step like a Christian, and in another like a worldling; which is an unpleasant and unprofitable way, not according to that word, Psalm xviii. 32. *Thou hast set my feet as hinds' feet,*—set them *even,* as the word is, not only swift, but straight and even; and that is the thing here required, that the whole course and revolution of a Christian's life be like himself. And that it may be so, the whole body of sin, and all the members of it, *all the deceitful lusts, must be crucified.*

In the words there are three things: 1. One point of a Christian's ordinary entertainment in the world is *to be evil spoken of.* 2. Their good use of that evil is *to do the better for it.* 3. The good end and the certain effect of their so doing is *the glory of God.*

1. *Whereas they speak against you as evildoers.*] This is in general the disease of man's corrupt nature, and argues much the baseness and depravedness of it,—this propension to evil-speaking one of another, either blotting the best actions with misconstructions, or taking doubtful things by the left ear; not choosing the most favorable, but, on the contrary, the very harshest sense that can be put upon them. Some men take more pleasure in the narrow eying of the true and real faults of men, and then speak of them with a kind of delight. All these kinds of evil speakings

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are such fruits as spring from that bitter root of pride and self-love which is naturally deep fastened in every man's heart. But, besides this general bent to evil speaking, there is a particular malice in the world against those that are *born of God*, which must have vent in calumnies and reproaches. If this evil speaking be the hissing that is natural to the serpent's seed, surely, by reason of their natural antipathy, it must be breathed forth most against the *seed of the woman*, those that are one with Jesus Christ. If the *tongues* of the ungodly be *sharp swords* even to one another, they will *whet them* sharper than ordinary when they are to use them against the righteous, to wound their name. The evil tongue must be always burning, that *is set on fire of hell*, as St. James speaks; but against the godly, it will be sure to be heated seven times hotter than it is for others. The reasons for this are, 1. Being naturally haters of God, and yet unable to reach him, what wonder is it if their malice vent itself against his image in his children, and labor to blot and stain that, all they can, with the foulest calumnies? 2. Because they are neither able nor willing themselves to attain unto the spotless, holy life of Christians, they bemire them, and would make them like themselves, by false aspersions: they can not rise to the estate of the godly, and therefore they endeavor to draw them down to theirs by detraction. 3. The reproaches they cast upon the professors of pure religion they mean mainly again religion itself, and intend by them to reflect upon it.

These evil speakings of the world against pious men professing religion are partly gross falsehoods, invented without the least ground or appearance of truth; for the world being ever credulous of evil, especially upon so deep a prejudice as it hath against the godly, the falsest and most absurd calumnies will always find so much belief as to make them odious, or very suspected at least, to such as know them not. This is the world's maxim, *Lie confidently, and it will always do something;* as a stone taken out of the mire and thrown against a white wall, though it stick not there, but rebound presently back again, yet it leaves a spot behind it. And with this kind of evil-speakings were the primitive Christians surcharged, even with gross and horrible falsehoods, as all know who know anything of the history of those times; even such things were reported of them as the worst of wicked men would scarcely be guilty of. The devil, as crafty as he is, makes use, again and again, of his old inventions, and makes them serve in several ages; for so were the *Waldenses* accused of inhuman banquetings and beastly promiscuous uncleanness, and divers things *not once to be named among Christians*, much less to be practised by them. So that it is no new thing to meet with the impurest, vilest slanders, as the world's reward of holiness and the practice of pure religion.

Then, again, consider how much more will the wicked insult upon the least *real blemishes* that they can espy among the professors of godliness. And in this there is a threefold injury very ordinary. 1. Strictly to pry into, and maliciously to object against Christians, the smallest imperfections and frailties of their lives, as if they pretended to and promised absolute perfection. They do indeed *exercise themselves* (such as are Christians indeed), with St. Paul, *to keep a good conscience in all things toward God and men* (Acts xxiv. 16); they have a *regard unto all God's commandments*, as David speaks; they have a sincere love to God, which makes them study the exactest obedience they can reach: and this is an imperfect kind of perfection; it is evangelical, but not angelical. 2. Men are apt to impute the scandalous falls of some particular Christians to the whole number. It is a very short incompetent rule, to make judgment of any one man himself by one action, much more to measure all the rest of the same profession by it. And yet they proceed further in this way of misjudging. 3. They impute the personal failings of men to their religion, and disparage it because of the faults of those that profess it; which, as the ancients plead well, is the greatest injustice, and such as they would not be guilty of against their own philosophers. They could well distinguish between their doctrine and the manners of some of their followers, and thus ought they to have dealt with Christians too. They ought to have considered their religion in itself, and the doctrine that it teacheth, and had they found it vicious, the blame had been just; but if it taught nothing but holiness and righteousness, then the blame of any unholiness or unrighteousness found among Christians ought to rest upon the persons themselves who were guilty of it, and not to be stretched to the whole number of professors, much less to the religion that they professed. And yet this is still the custom of the world upon the least failing they can espy in the godly, or such as seem to be so; much more with open mouth do they revile religion upon any gross sin in any of its professors.

But seeing this is the very character of a profane mind, and the badge of the enemies of religion, beware of sharing in the least with them in it. Give not easy entertainment to the reports of profane or of mere civil men against the professors of religion; they are undoubtedly partial, and their testimony may be justly suspected. Lend them not a ready ear to receive their evil-speakings, much less your tongue to divulge them, and set them further going; yea, take heed that you take not pleasure in any the least kind of scoffs against the sincerity and power of religion. And, all of you who desire to walk as Christians, be very wary that you wrong not one another, and help not the wicked against you, by your mutual misconstructions

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and miscensures one of another. Far be it from you to take pleasure in hearing others evil spoken of; whether unjustly or though it be some way deservedly, yet let it be alway grievous to you, and no way pleasing to hear such things, much less to speak of them. It is the devil's delight to be pleased with evil speakings. The Syrian calls him an *Akal Kartza, Eater of slanders or calumnies.* They are a dish that pleases his palate, and men are naturally fond of this diet. In Psalm xxxv. 16, there is a word that is rendered *mockers at feasts*, or *feasting-mockers*—persons who feasted men's ears at their meetings with speaking of the faults of others scoffingly, and therefore shared with them of their cakes, or feasts, as the word is. But to a renewed Christian mind, which hath a new taste, and all its senses new, there is nothing more unsavory than to hear the defaming of others, especially of such as profess religion. Did *the law of love* possess our hearts, it would regulate both the ear and tongue, and make them most tender of the name of our brethren: it would teach us the faculty of covering their infirmities, and judging favorably, taking always the best side and most charitable sense of their actions: it would teach us to blunt the edge of our censures upon ourselves, our own hard hearts and rebellious wills within, that they might remain no more sharp against others than is needful for their good.

And this would cut short those that are without from a great deal of provisions of evil-speaking against Christians that they many times are furnished with by Christians themselves, through their uncharitable carriage one toward another. However, this being the hard measure that they always find in the world, it is their wisdom to consider it aright, and to study that good which, according to the apostle's advice, may be extracted out of it, and that is the second thing to be spoken to.

*Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles.*] As the sovereign power of drawing good out of evil resides in God, and argues his primitive goodness, so he teacheth his own children some faculty this way, that they may resemble him in it. He teacheth them to draw sweetness out of their bitterest afflictions, and increase of inward peace from their outward troubles. And as these buffetings of the tongue are no small part of their sufferings, so they reap no small benefit by them many ways: particularly in this one, that they order their conversation the better, and walk the more exactly for it.

And this, no doubt, in Divine providence, is intended and ordered for their good, as are all their other trials. The sharp censures and evil speakings that a Christian is encompassed with in the world is no other than a hedge of thorns set on every side, that he go not out of his way, but keep straight on in it between them, not declining to the right hand nor to the left: whereas, if they found nothing but the favor and good opinion of the world, they might, as in a way unhedged, be subject to expatiate and wander out into the meadows of carnal pleasures that are abou them, which would call and allure them, and often divert them from their journey.

And thus it might fall out, that Christians would deserve censure and evil-speakings the more, if they did not usually suffer them undeserved. This then turns into a great advantage to them, making their conduct more answerable to those two things that our Savior joins, *watch and pray;* causing them to be the more vigilant over themselves, and the more earnest with God for his watching over them and conducting of them. *Make my ways straight*, says David, *because of mine enemies*, Psal. v. 8; the word is *my observers*, or those that scan my ways, every foot of them; that examine them as a verse, or as a song of music; if there be but a wrong measure in them, they will not let it slip, but will be sure to mark it.

And if the enemies of the godly wait for their halting, shall not they scan their own paths themselves, that they may not halt? shall they not examine them to order them, as the wicked do to censure them: still depending wholly upon the spirit of God as their guide, *to lead them into all truth*, and to teach them how *to order their conversation aright*, that it may be all of a piece, holy and blameless, and still like itself?

*Honest.*] Fair or beautiful: the same word doth fitly signify goodness and beauty, for that which is the truest and most lasting beauty grows fresher in old age, as the psalmist speaks of the righteous, *those that be planted in the house of God*, Psalm xcii. 12–14. "Could the beauty of virtue be seen," said a philosopher, "it would draw all to love it." A Christian, holy conversation hath such a beauty, that when they who are strangers to it begin to discern it at all aright, they can not choose but love it; and where it begets not love, yet it silences calumny, or at least evinces its falsehood.

The goodness or beauty of a Christian's conversation consisting in symmetry and conformity to the word of God as its rule, he ought diligently to study that rule, and to square his ways by it; not to walk at random, but to apply that rule to every step at home and abroad, and to be as careful to keep the beauty of his ways unspotted, as those women are of their faces and attire who are most studious of comeliness.

But so far are we who call ourselves Christians from this exact regard of our conversation, that the most part not only have many foul spots, but they themselves, and all their ways, are nothing but defilement, all one spot; as our apostle calls them, *blots are they and spots*, 2 Pet. ii. 13. And even they who are Christians indeed, yet are not so watchful and accurate in all their ways as becomes

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them, but stain their *holy profession* either with pride, or covetousness, or contentions, or some other such like uncomeliness.

Let us all, therefore, resolve more to study this good and comely conversation, the apostle here exhorts to, that it may be such as *becometh the gospel of Christ*, as St. Paul desires his Philippians, ch. i. 27. And if you live among profane persons, who will be to you as the unbelieving Gentiles were to these believing Jews who lived among them, traducers of you, and given to speak evil of you, and of religion in you, trouble not yourselves with many apologies and clearings when you are evil spoken of, but let the track of your life answer for you, your *honest* and *blameless conversation:* that will be the shortest, and most real and effectual way of confuting all obloquies; as when one in the schools was proving by a sophistical argument that there could be no motion, the philosopher answered it fully and shortly by rising up and walking. If thou wouldst pay them home, this is a kind of revenge not only allowed thee, but recommended to thee; be avenged on evil speakings by well doing, shame them from it. It was a king that said, *It was kingly to do well and be ill-spoken of.* Well may Christians acknowledge it to be true, when they consider that it was the lot of their king, Jesus Christ; and well may they be content, seeing he hath made them likewise *kings* (as we heard, ver. 9), to be conformable to him in this too, this kingly way of suffering, to be unjustly evil spoken of, and still to go on in doing the more good; always aiming in so doing (as our Lord did), at the glory of our Heavenly Father. This is the third thing.

*That they may glorify God in the day of their visitation.* He says not, They shall praise or commend you, but *shall glorify God.* In what way soever this time, this *day of visitation* be taken, the effect itself is this, *They shall glorify God.* It is this the apostle still holds before the eye, as that upon which a Christian doth willingly set his eye, and keep it fixed in all his ways. He doth not teach them to be sensible of their own esteem as it concerns themselves, but only as the glory of their God is interested in it. Were it not for this, a generous-minded Christian could set a very light rate upon all the thoughts and speeches of men concerning him, whether good o bad; and could easily drown all their mistakes in the conscience of the favor and approbation of his God. *It is a very small thing for me to be judged of you, or of the day of man: he that judgeth me is the Lord.* 1 Cor. iv. 3. Man hath a day of judging, but it, and his judgment with it, soon passes away; but God hath *his day*, and it, together with his sentence, abideth for ever, as the apostle there adds. As if he should say, *I appeal to God;* but considering that the religion he professes, and the God whom he worships in that religion, are wronged by those reproaches, and that the calumnies cast upon Christians reflect upon their Lord—this is the thing that makes him sensible; he feels on that side only. *The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me*, says the psalmist: and this makes a Christian desirous to vindicate, even to men, his religion and his God, without regard to himself; because he may say, *the reproaches of them that reproach* only *me, have fallen upon thee.* Psalm lxix. 9.

This is his intent in the holiness and integrity of his life, that God may be glorified: this is the axis about which all *this good conversation* moves and turns continually.

And he that forgets this, let his conversation be ever so plausible and spotless, knows not what it is to be a Christian. As they say of the eagles, who try their young ones whether they be of the right kind or not, by holding them before the sun, and if they can look steadfastly upon it, they own them, if not, they throw them away: this is the true evidence of an upright and real Christian, to have a steadfast eye on the glory of God, the *Father of lights.* In all, let God be glorified, says the Christian, and that suffices: that is the sum of his desires. He is far from glorying in himself, or seeking to raise himself, for he knows that of himself he is nothing, but by the *free grace of God he is what he is.* "Whence any glorying to thee, rottenness and dust?" says St. Bernard. "Whence is it to thee if thou are holy? Is it not the Holy Spirit that hath sanctified thee? If thou couldst work miracles, though they were done by thy hand, yet it were not by thy power, but by the power of God."

*To the end that my glory may sing praise unto thee*, says David, Psalm xxx. 12. Whether his tongue, or his soul, or both, be meant, what he calls *his glory*, he shows us, and what use he hath for it, namely, to give the Lord glory, to sing his praises, and that then it was truly David's glory when it was so employed, in giving glory to him whose peculiar due glory is. What have we to do in the world, as his creatures, once and again his creatures, his new creatures, *created unto good works*, but to exercise ourselves in those, and by those to advance his glory, that all may return to him from whom all is, as the rivers run back to the sea whence they came? *Of him, and through him*, and therefore, *for him are all things*, says the apostle, Rom. xi. 36. They that serve base gods, seek how to advance and aggrandize them. The covetous man studies to make his *Mammon* as great as he can, all his thoughts and pains run upon that service, and so do the voluptuous and ambitious for theirs; and shall not they who profess themselves to be the servants of the only great and the only true God, have their hearts much more, at least as much possessed with desires of honoring and exalting *him?* Should not this be their predominant design and thought?—What wa-

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shall I most advance the glory of my God? How shall I, who am under stronger obligations than they all, set in with the heavens and the earth, and the other creatures, to declare his excellency, his greatness, and his goodness?

*In the day of visitation.*] The beholding of your good works may work this in them, that they may be gained to acknowledge and embrace that religion, and that God, which for the present they reject; but that it may be thus, they must be visited with that same light and grace from above, which hath sanctified you. This, I conceive, is the sense of this word, though it may be, and is taken divers other ways by interpreters. Possibly, in this *day of visitation*, is implied the clearer preaching of the gospel among those Gentiles, where the dispersed Jews dwelt; and that when they should compare the light of that doctrine with the light of their lives, and find the agreement between them, that might be helpful to their effectual calling, and so they might glorify God. But to the end that they might do thus indeed, there must be, along with the word of God, and the good works of his people, a particular visiting of their souls by the Spirit of God. Your good conversation may be one good mean of their conversion; therefore this may be a motive to that; but to make it an effectual mean, this day of gracious visitation must dawn upon them; *the day-spring from on high* must visit them, as it is Luke i. 7, 8.

VER. 13. Submit yourselves unto every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king, as supreme;

VER. 14. Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.

IT is one of the falsest, and yet one of the commonest prejudices that the world hath always entertained against true religion, that it is an enemy to civil power and government. The adversaries of the Jews charged this fault upon their city, the then seat of the true worship of God, Ezra iv. 15. The Jews charged it upon the preachers of the Christian religion, Acts xvii. 7, as they pretended the same quarrel against Christ himself. And generally, the enemies of the Christians of primitive times, loaded them with the slander of rebellion and contempt of authority. Therefore our apostle, descending to particular rules of Christian life, by which it may be blameless, and silence calumny, begins with this, not only as a thing of prime importance in itself, but as particularly fit for those he wrote to, being at once both Jews and Christians, for the clearing of themselves and their religion: *Submit yourselves*, &c.

There are in the words divers particulars to be considered, all concurring to press this main duty of obedience to magistrates, not only as well consistent with true religion, but as indeed inseparable from it. Not to parcel out the words into many pieces, they may, I conceive, be all not unfitly comprised under these two: 1. The extent of this duty; 2. The ground of it.

1. The extent of the duty, viz., *To all civil power*, of what kind soever, for the time received and authorized; there being no need of questioning what was the rise and original of civil power, either in the nature of it, or in the persons of those that are in possession of it. For if you will trace them quite through in the succession of ages, and narrowly eye their whole circle, there be few crowns in the world, in which there will not be found some crack or other, more or less. If you look on those great monarchies in Daniel's vision, you see one of them built up upon the ruins of another; and all of them represented by terrible devouring beasts of monstrous shape. And whether the Roman empire be the fourth there, as many take it, or not, yet, in the thing spoken of that fourth, as well as of the rest, it is inferior to none of them, enlarging itself by conquests in all parts of the world. And under it were the provinces to which this epistle is addressed: yet the apostle enjoins his brethren subjection and obedience to its authority.

Nor is it a question so to be moved as to suspend, or at all abate, our obedience to that which possesses in the present where we live, what form of government is most just and commodious.

God hath indeed been more express in the officers and government of his own house, his church; but civil societies he hath left at liberty, in the choosing and modelling of civil government, though always, indeed, overruling their choice and changes in that, by the secret hand of his wise and powerful providence. Yet he hath set them no particular rule touching the frame of it; only, the common rule of equity and justice ought to be regarded, both in the contriving and managing of government. Nevertheless, though it be some way defective in both, those that are subject to it, are in all things lawful to submit to its authority, whether supreme or subordinate; as we have it here expressly, *Whether to the king as supreme* (namely, to the emperor), or *to the governors sent by him*;—which, though a judicious interpreter refers to God, and will not admit of any other sense, yet it seems most suitable both to the words, and to the nature of the government of those provinces, to take that word *to him* as relating to the king; for the expression *them that are sent*, answers to the other, *the king as supreme*, and so is a very clear designation of the inferior governors of those times and places. And whatsoever was their end who sent them, and their carriage who were sent, that which the apostle adds, expresses the end for which they should be sent to govern, and at which they should aim in governing, as the true end of all government. And though they were not fully true to that end in their deportment, but pos-



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sibly did many things unjustly, yet, as God hath ordained authority for this end, there is always so much justice in the most depraved government, as renders it a public good, and therefore puts upon inferiors an obligation to obedience: and this leads us to consider,

2dly, The ground of this duty. The main ground of submitting to human authority, is the interest that divine authority hath in it, God having both appointed civil government as a common good among men, and particularly commanded his people obedience to it, as a particular good to them, and a thing very suitable with their profession: it is *for the Lord's sake*. This word carries the whole weight of the duty, and is a counterbalance to the former, which seems to be therefore on purpose so expressed, that this may answer it. Although civil authority, in regard of particular forms of government, and the choice of particular persons to govern, is but a human ordinance, or *man's creature*, as the word is, yet, both the good of government, and the duty of subjection to it, are God's ordinance: and therefore, *for his sake submit yourselves*.

[1.] God hath in general instituted civil government for the good of human society, and still there is good in it. Tyranny is better than anarchy. [2.] It is by his providence that men are advanced to places of authority. See Psalm lxxv. 6, 7; Dan. iv. 25; John xix. 11. [3.] It is his command, that obedience be yielded to them. Rom. xiii. 1; Tit. iii. 1. &c. And the consideration of this ties a Christian to all loyalty and due obedience, which, being still *for the Lord's sake*, can not hold in anything that is against the Lord's own command; for kings and rulers, in such a case, leave their station. Now the subjection here enjoined is, ὑποτάγητε, *be subject* to them, as it were in your rank, still in subordination to God; but if they go out of that even line, follow them not. They that obey the unlawful commands of kings do it in regard to *their god*, no question, but that *their god is their belly*, or their ambition, or their avarice.

But not only ought the exercise of authority, and submission to it, to be confined to things just and lawful in themselves, but the very purpose of the heart, both in command and obedience, should be in *the Lord*, and *for his sake*. This is the only straight, and the only safe rule, both for rulers and for people to walk by. Would kings, and the other powers of the world consider the supremacy and greatness of that King of whom they hold all their crowns and dignities, they would be no less careful of their submission and homage to him, than they are desirous of their people's submission to themselves.

I will not speak at all of their civil obligations to their people, and the covenant of justice that with good reason is betwixt them in the fundamental constitutions of all well-ordered kingdoms; nor meddle with that point —the dependance that human authority hath upon the societies of men over whom it is, according to which it is here called *man's ordinance*, or *creature*, ἀνθρωπίνη κτίσει. This is a thing that the greatest and most absolute of princes can not deny, that all their authority is dependant upon the great God, both as the author of it in the general, and the sovereign disposer of it to particular men, *giving the kingdoms of the earth to whom he will*. Dan. iv. 25. And therefore he may most justly require obedience and fealty of them, that they *serve the Lord in fear*, and if they rejoice in their dignities over men, yet that they do it with *trembling*, under a sense of their duty to God, and that they throw down their crowns at the feet of Christ, *the Lord's anointed*.

And to this they are the more obliged, considering that religion and the gospel of Christ do so much press the duty of their people's obedience to them; so that they wrong both Christianity and themselves very far, in mistaking it as an enemy to their authority, when it is so far from prejudicing it, that it confirms it, and pleads for it. Surely they do most ungratefully requite the Lord and his Christ, when they say (as Psalm ii.), *Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us*. Whereas the Lord binds the cords of kings and their authority fast upon their people; not the cords of tyranny indeed, to bind the subjects as beasts to be sacrifices to the passion of their rulers, but the cords of just and due obedience to their kings and governors. The Lord doth (as you see here) bind it upon all that profess his name and strengthens it by the respect his people carry to himself, enjoining them, that *for his sake*, they would obey their rulers. So that kings need not fear true religion, that it will ever favor anything that can justly be called rebellion; on the contrary, it still urges loyalty and obedience: so that as they ought in duty, they may in true policy and wisdom, befriend true religion, as a special friend to their authority, and hate that religion of *Rome* which is indeed rebellion, and that *mother of abominations* who makes the *kings of the earth drunk with her cup*, and makes them dream of increase of authority while they are truly on the losing hand. But besides that they owe their power to the advancement of Christ's kingdom, by so employing themselves as to strengthen it, they do themselves good: they confirm their own thrones, when they erect his: as it was said of Cæsar, that by setting up Pompey's statue, he settled and fastened his own.

But it is an evil too natural to men, to forget the true end and use of any good the Lord confers on them. And thus kings and rulers too often consider not for what they are exalted; they think it is for themselves, to honor and please themselves, and not to honor God and benefit their people, to encourage and reward the good (as here it is),

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and to punish the wicked. They are set on high for the good of those that are below them, that they may be refreshed with their light and influence; as the lights of heaven are set there in the highest parts of the world, for the use and benefit of the very lowest. God set them in the firmament of heaven, but to what end? *To give light upon the earth.* Gen. i. 15. And the mountains are raised above the rest of the earth, not to be places of prey and robbery, as sometimes they are turned to be, but to send forth streams from their springs into the valleys, and make them fertile; these mountains and hills (greater and lesser rulers, higher and lower), are to send forth to the people the *streams of righteousness and peace.* Psalm lxxii. 31.

But it is the corruption and misery of man's nature, that he doth not know, and can hardly be persuaded to learn, either how to command aright, or how to obey; and no doubt many of those that can see and blame the injustice of others in authority, would be more guilty that way themselves, if they had the same power.

It is the pride and self-love of our nature that begets disobedience in inferiors, and violence and injustice in superiors; that depraved humor which ties to every kind of government a propension to a particular disease; which makes royalty easily degenerate into tyranny, the government of nobles into factions, and popular government into confusion.

As civil authority, and subjection to it, are the institution of God, so the peaceable correspondence of these two, just government and due obedience, is the special gift of God's own hand, and a prime blessing to states and kingdoms; and the troubling and interruption of their course is one of the highest public judgments by which the Lord punishes oftentimes the other sins both of rulers and people. And whatsoever be the cause, and on which side soever be the justice of the cause, it can not be looked upon but as a heavy plague, and the fruit of many and great provocations, when kings and their people, who should be a mutual blessing and honor to each other, are turned into scourges one to another, or into a devouring fire; as it is in the parable, Judg. ix. 20. *Fire going forth from Abimelech to devour the men of Shechem, and fire from Shechem to devour Abimelech.*

VER. 15. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men;

VER. 16. As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

THIS continues the same reason of the same Christian duty; if they will obey the Lord, then they must obey civil powers, for that is his will, and they will not deny their obligation to him, for they are his servants, v. 16. The words, indeed, are more general than the former, but they relate chiefly, in this place, to the particular in hand, implying that neither in that kind nor in any other, Christians should dishonor their profession, and abuse their liberty, mistaking it as an exemption from those duties to which it doth more straitly tie them. So, then, the point of civil obedience and all other good conversation among men, is here recommended to Christians, as conformable to the will of God, and the most effectual clearing of their profession, and very agreeable to their Christian liberty.

*The will of God.*] This is the strongest and most binding reason that can be used to a Christian mind, which hath resigned itself to be governed by that rule, to have *the will of God* for its law. Whatsoever is required of it upon that warrant, it can not refuse. Although it cross a man's own humor, or his private interest, yet if his heart be subjected to the will of God, he will not stand with him in anything. One word from God, *I will have it so,* silences all, and carries it against all opposition.

It were a great point, if we could be persuaded to esteem duly of this: it were indeed all. It would make light and easy work in those things that go so hardly on with us, though we are daily exhorted to them. Is it the will of God that I should live soberly? Then, though my own corrupt will and my companions be against it, yet it must be so. Wills he that I forbear cursing and oaths, though it is my custom to use them? Yet I must offer violence to my custom, and go against the stream of all their customs that are round about me, to obey his will who wills all things justly and holily. Will he have my charity not only liberal in giving, but in forgiving, and real and hearty in both? Will he have me *bless them that curse me, and do good to them that hate me, and love mine enemies?* Though the world counts it a hard task, and my own corrupt heart possibly finds it so, yet it shall be done; and not as upon unpleasant necessity, but willingly and cheerfully, and with the more delight because it is difficult; for so it proves my obedience the more, and my love to him whose will it is. Though mine enemies deserve not my love, yet he who bids me love them, does; and if he will have this the touchstone to try the uprightness of my love to him, shall it fail there? No; his will commands me absolutely, and he himself is so lovely, that there can be nobody so unlovely in themselves, or to me, but I can love them upon his command, and for his sake.

But that it may be thus, there must be a renewed frame of mind, by which a man may renounce the world, and the forms of it, and himself, and his own sinful heart, and its way, to study and follow the only *good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God,* Rom. xii. 2, to move most in that line, not willingly declining to either hand, to have his whole mind taken up in searching it, and his whole heart in embracing it. *Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is,*

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says the Apostle Paul, Eph. v. 17, being about to exhort to particular duties, as our apostle here is doing.

This is the task of a Christian, to understand his Lord's will, and with a practical understanding, that he may walk in all well pleasing unto God. Thus the apostle likewise exhorts the Thessalonians pathetically (1 epistle, iv. 1), and adds, *This is the will of God, even your sanctification.* And he then proceeds particularly against uncleanness and deceit, &c.

Let this, then, be your endeavor, to have your wills crucified to whatsoever is sinful, yea, to all outward indifferent things with a kind of indifferency. The most things that men are so stiff in, are not worth an earnest willing. In a word, it were the only happy and truly spiritual temper, to have our will quite rooted out, and the will of God placed in its stead; to have no other will than his, that it might constantly, yea, so to speak, identically follow it in all things. This is the will of God, therefore it is mine.

*That with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.*] The duties of the second table, or of well doing toward men, are more obvious to men devoid of religion, than those that have an immediate relation to God; and therefore, as in other epistles, the apostle is here particular in these, for the vindicating of religion to them that are without. Ignorance usually is loud and prattling, making a mighty noise, and so hath need of a *muzzle to silence it,* as the word φιμοῦν imports. They that were ready to speak evil of religion, are called *witless* or foolish men; there was perverseness in their ignorance, as the word ἀφρόνων intimates. And generally, all kinds of evil speakings and uncharitable censurings do argue a foolish, worthless mind, whence they proceed; and yet, they are the usual divertisement of the greatest part of mankind, and take up very much of their converse and discourse; which is an evidence of the baseness and perverseness of their minds. For, whereas those that have most real goodness, delight most to observe what is good and commendable in others, and to pass by their blemishes: it is the true character of vile, unworthy persons (as scurvy flies sit upon sores), to skip over all the good that is in men, and fasten upon their infirmities.

But especially doth it discover *ignorance and folly,* to turn the failings of men to the disadvantage of religion. None can be such enemies to it, but they that know it not, and see not the beauty that is in it. However, the way to silence them, we see, is by *well doing;* that silences them more than whole volumes of Apologies. When a Christian walks irreproveably, his enemies have nowhere to fasten their teeth on him, but are forced to gnaw their own malignant tongues. As it secures the godly, thus to stop the lying mouths of foolish men, so it is as painful to them to be thus stopped, as muzzling is to beasts, and it punishes their malice.

And this is a wise Christian's way, instead of impatiently fretting at the mistakes or wilful miscensures of men, to keep still on his calm temper of mind, and upright course of life, and silent innocence; this, as a rock, breaks the waves into foam that roar about it.

*As free.*] This, the apostle adds, lest any should so far mistake the nature of their Christian liberty, as to dream of an exemption from obedience either to God, or to men for his sake, and according to his appointment. Their freedom he grants, but would have them understand aright what it is. I can not here insist at large on the spiritual freedom of Christians; nor is it here needful, being mentioned only for the clearing of it in this point; but free they are, and they only, who are partakers of this liberty. *If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed,* John viii. 36. The rest are slaves to Satan and the world, and their own lusts: as the Israelites in Egypt, working in the clay under hard task-masters.

Much discourse hath been spent, and much ink hath been spilt upon the debate of *free-will,* but truly, all the liberty it hath till the Son and his Spirit free it, is that miserable freedom the apostle speaks of, Rom. vi. 20: *While ye were servants to sin, ye were free from righteousness.*

And as we are naturally subject to the vile drudgery of sin, so we are condemned to the proper *wages of sin,* which the apostle there tells us is *death,* according to the just sentence of the law. But our Lord Christ was anointed for this purpose, *to set us free,* both to work and to publish liberty, to *proclaim liberty to captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound.* Isa. lxi. 1. Having paid our complete ransom, he sends his word as the message, and his Spirit, to perform it effectually, to set us free, to let us know it, and to bring us out of prison. He was bound and scourged, as a slave or malefactor, to purchase us this liberty; therefore ought it to be our special care, first, to have part in it, and then to be like it, and *stand fast in it,* in all points.

But that we deceive not ourselves, as too many do who have no portion in this liberty, we ought to know that it is not *to* inordinate walking and licentiousness, as our liberty, that we are called, but *from* them, as our thraldom; we are not called from obedience, but to it. Therefore beware that you shuffle in, under this specious name of *liberty,* nothing that belongs not to it. Make it not a *cloak of maliciousness:* it is too precious a garment for so base a use. Liberty is indeed Christ's livery that he gives to all his followers; but to live suitably to it, is not to live in wickedness or disobedience of any kind, but in obedience and holiness. You are called to be *the servants of God,* and that is your dignity and your liberty.

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The apostles of this gospel of liberty gloried in this title, *The servants of Jesus Christ*. David, before that psalm of praise for his victories and exaltations, being now settled on his throne, prefixes, as more honor than all these, *A Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord*, Psalm xviii. 1. It is the only true happiness both of kings and their subjects, to be his subjects. It is the glory of the angels to be his *ministering spirits*. The more we attain unto the faculty of serving him cheerfully and diligently, the more still we find of this spiritual liberty, and have the more joy in it. As it is the most honorable, it is likewise the most comfortable and most gainful service; and they that once know it, will never change it for any other in the world. Oh! that we could live as his servants, employing all our industry to do him service in the condition and place wherein he hath set us, whatsoever it is, and as faithful servants, more careful of his affairs than of our own, accounting it our main business to seek the advancement of his glory. *Happy is the servant whom the master, when he cometh, shall find so doing.* Matt. xxiv. 46.

VER. 17. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

THIS is a precious cluster of divine precepts. The whole face of the heavens is adorned with stars, but they are of different magnitudes, and in some parts they are thicker set than in others: thus it is likewise in the holy Scriptures. And these are the two books that the psalmist sets open before us, Psal. xix.; the heavens as a choice piece of the works of God instructing us, and the word of God more full and clear than they. Here is a constellation of very bright stars near together. These words have very briefly, and yet not obscured by briefness, but withal very plainly, the sum of our duty toward God and men; to men both in general, *Honor all men*, and in special relations—in their Christian or religious relation, *Love the brotherhood*, and in a chief civil relation, *Honor the king*. And our whole duty to God, comprised under the name of *his fear*, is set in the middle between these, as the common spring of all duty to men, and of all due observance of it, and the sovereign rule by which it is to be regulated.

I shall speak of them as they lie in the text. We need not labor about the connexion; for in such variety of brief practical directions, it hath not such places as in doctrinal discourses. The apostle having spoken of one particular wherein he would have his brethren to clear and commend their Christian profession, now accumulates these directions as most necessary, and afterward goes on to particular duties of servants, &c. But first, observe in general, how plain and easy, and how few are those things that are the rule of our life; no dark sentences to puzzle the understanding, nor large discourses and long periods to burden the memory; they are all plain; there is *nothing wreathed* nor distorted in them, as Wisdom speaks of her instructions, Prov. viii. 8.

And this gives check to a double folly among men, contrary the one to the other, but both agreeing in mistaking and wronging the word of God; the one is of those that despise the word, and that doctrine and preaching that is conformable to it, for its plainness and simplicity; the other of those that complain of its difficulty and darkness. As for the first, they certainly do not take the true end for which the word is designed, that it is the law of our life (and it is mainly requisite in laws, that they be both brief and clear): that it is our guide and light to happiness; and if that which ought to be our *light, be darkness, how great will that darkness be!*

It is true (but I am not now to insist on this point), that there be dark and deep passages in Scripture, for the exercise, yea, for the humbling, yea, for the amazing and astonishing of the sharpest-sighted readers. But this argues much the pride and vanity of men's minds, when they busy themselves only in those, and throw aside altogether the most necessary, which are therefore the easiest and plainest truths in it. As in nature, the commodities that are of greatest necessity, God hath made most common and easiest to be had, so, in religion, such instructions as these now in our hands are given us to live and walk by; and in the search of things that are more obscure, and less useful, men evidence that they had rather be learned than holy, and have still more mind to the *tree of knowledge* than the *tree of life*. And in hearing of the word, are not they who are any whit more knowing than ordinary, still gaping after new notions, after something to add to the stock of their speculative and discoursing knowledge, loathing this daily manna, these profitable exhortations, and *requiring meat for their lust?* There is an intemperance of the mind, as well as of the mouth. You would think it, and, may be, not spare to call it, a poor cold sermon, that were made up of such plain precepts as these; *Honor all men; love the brotherhood; fear God; honor the king;* and yet, this is the language of God, it is his way, this foolish, despicable way by which he guides, and brings to heaven them that believe.

Again; we have others that are still complaining of the *difficulty and darkness* of the word of God and divine truths; to say nothing of Rome's doctrine, who talks thus, in order to excuse her sacrilege of stealing away the word from the people of God (a senseless pretext though it were true; because the word is dark of itself, should it therefore be made darker, by locking it up in an unknown tongue?) but we speak of the common vulgar excuse, which the gross, ignorant profaneness of many seeks to shroud itself under, that they are not learned, and can not reach the

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doctrine of the Scriptures. There be deep mysteries there indeed: but what say you to these things, such rules as these, *honor all men*, &c.? Are such as these riddles, that you can not know their meaning? Rather, do not all understand them, and all neglect them? Why set you not on to do these? and then you should understand more. *A good understanding have all they that do his commandments*, says the psalmist, Psal. cxi. 10. As one said well, "The best way to understand the mysterious and high discourse in the beginning of St. Paul's epistles, is, to begin at the practice of those rules and precepts that are in the latter end of them." The way to attain to know more is to *receive the truth in the love of it*, and to obey what you know. The truth is, such truths as these will leave you inexcusable, even the most ignorant of you. You can not but know, you hear often, that you ought to *love one another*, and *to fear God*, &c., and yet you never apply yourselves in earnest to the practice of these things, as will appear to your own consciences, if they deal honestly with you in the particulars.

*Honor all men.*] Honor, in a narrower sense, is not a universal due to all, but peculiar to some kinds of persons. Of this the apostle speaks, Rom. xii. 8. *Honor to whom honor is due*, and that in different degrees, to parents, to masters, and other superiors. There is an honor that hath, as it were, Cæsar's image and superscription on it, and so is particularly due to him; as here it follows, *honor the king*. But there is something that goes not unfitly under the name of honor, generally due to every man without exception; and it consists, as all honor doth, partly in inward esteem of them, partly in outward behavior toward them. And the former must be the ground and cause of the latter.

We owe not the same measure of esteem to all. We may, yea, we ought to take notice of the different outward quality, or inward graces and gifts of men; nor is it a fault to perceive the shallowness and weakness of men with whom we converse, and to esteem more highly those on whom God hath conferred more of such things as are truly worthy of esteem. But unto the meanest we do owe some measure of esteem, 1st, Negatively. We are not to entertain despising, disdainful thoughts of any, how worthless and mean soever. As the admiring of men, the very best, is a foolish excess on the one hand, so, the total contemning of any, the very poorest, is against this rule on the other; for that *contemning of vile persons*, the psalmist speaks of, Psalm xv. 3, and commends, is the dislike and hatred of their sin, which is their vileness, and the not accounting them for outward respects, worthy of such esteem as their wickedness does, as it were, strip them of. 2dly. We are to observe and respect the smallest good that is in any. Although a Christian be never so base in his outward condition, in body or mind, of very mean intellectuals and natural endowments, yet, they who know the worth of spiritual things will esteem the grace of God that is in him, in the midst of all those disadvantages, as a pearl in a rough shell. Grace carries still its own worth, though under a deformed body and ragged garments, yea, though they have but a small measure of that neither—the very lowest degree of grace; as a pearl of the least size, or a small piece of gold, yet men will not throw it away, but, as they say, the least shavings of gold are worth the keeping. The Jews would not willingly tread upon the smallest piece of paper in their way, but took it up; "For possibly," said they, "the name of God may be on it." Though there was a little superstition in this, yet truly there is nothing but good religion in it, if we apply it to men. Trample not on any; there may be some work of grace there that thou knowest not of. The name of God may be written upon that soul thou treadest on; it may be a soul that Christ thought so much of, as to give his precious blood for it; therefore despise it not. Much more, I say, if thou canst perceive any appearance that it is such a one, oughtest thou to esteem it. Wheresoever thou findest the least trait of Christ's image, if thou lovest him, thou wilt honor it; or if there be nothing of this to be found in him thou lookest on, yet observe what common gift of any kind God hath bestowed on him, judgment, or memory, or faculty in his calling, or any such thing, for these in their degree are to be esteemed, and the person for them. And as there is no man so complete as to have the advantage in everything, so there is no man so low and unworthy but he hath something wherein he is preferable even to those that in other respects are much more excellent. Or imagine thou canst find nothing else in some men, yet honor thy own nature; esteem humanity in them, especially since humanity is exalted in Christ to be one with the Deity: account of the individual as a man. And, along with this esteem goes, 3dly, that general good will and affection due to men; whereas there are many who do not only outwardly express, but inwardly bear more regard to some dog or horse that they love, than to poor distressed men, and in so doing, do reflect dishonor upon themselves, and upon mankind.

The outward behavior wherein we owe honor to all, is nothing but a conformity to this inward temper of mind; for he that inwardly despiseth none, but esteemeth the good that is in the lowest, or at least esteemeth them in that they are men, and loves them as such, will accordingly use no outward sign of disdain of any; he will not have a scornful eye nor a reproachful tongue to move at any, not the meanest of his servants, nor the worst of his enemies; but, on the contrary, will acknowledge the good that is in every man, and give unto all that outward

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respect that is convenient for them, and that they are capable of, and will be ready to do them good as he hath opportunity and ability.

But instead of walking by this rule of *honoring all men*, what is there almost to be found among men, but a perverse proneness to dishonor one another, and every man ready to dishonor all men, that he may honor himself, reckoning that what he gives to others is lost to himself, and taking what he detracts from others as good booty to make up himself? Set aside men's own interest, and that common civility which for their own credit they use one with another, and truly there will be found very little of this real respect to others, proceeding from obedience to God and love to men—little disposition to be tender of their reputation and good name, and their welfare as of our own (for so the rule is), but we shall find mutual disesteem and defamation filling almost all societies.

And the bitter root of this iniquity is, that wicked, accursed self-love which dwells in us. Every man is naturally his own grand idol, would be esteemed and honored by any means, and to magnify that idol *self*, kills the good name and esteem of others in sacrifice to it. Hence, the narrow-observing eye and broad-speaking tongue, upon anything that tends to the dishonor of others: and where other things fail, the disdainful upbraiding of their birth, or calling, or anything that comes next to hand, serves for a reproach. And hence arises a great part of the jars and strifes among men, the most part being drunk with an overweening opinion of themselves, and the unworthiest the most so. *The sluggard*, says Solomon, *is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason*, Proverbs xxvi. 16; and not finding others of their mind, this frets and troubles them. They take the ready course to deceive themselves; for they look with both eyes on the failings and defects of others, and scarcely give their good qualities half an eye; while, on the contrary, in themselves, they study to the full their own advantages, and their weaknesses and defects (as one says) they skip over, as children do the hard words in their lesson, that are troublesome to read; and making this uneven parallel, what wonder if the result be a gross mistake of themselves! Men overrate themselves at home: they reckon that they ought to be regarded, and that their mind should carry it; and when they come abroad, and are crossed in this, this puts them out of all temper.

But the humble man, as is he is more conformable to this Divine rule, so he hath more peace by it; for he sets so low a rate upon himself in his own thoughts, that it is scarcely possibly for any to go lower in judging of him; and therefore, as he pays due respect to others to the full, and gives no ground of quarrel that way, so he challenges no such debt to himself, and thus avoids the usual contests that arise in this. *Only by pride comes contention*, says Solomon, Prov. xiii. 10. A man that will walk abroad in a crowded street, can not choose but be often jostled; but he that contracts himself, passes through more easily.

Study, therefore, this excellent grace of humility; not the personated acting of it in appearance, which may be a chief agent for pride, but true lowliness of mind, which will make you to be nothing in your own eyes, and content to be so in the eyes of others. Then will you obey this word; you will esteem all men as is meet, and not be troubled though all men disesteem you. As this humility is a precious grace, so it is the preserver of all other graces, and without it (if they could be without it), they were but as a box of precious powder carried in the wind without a cover, in danger of being scattered and blown away. If you would have honor, there is an ambition both allowed you, and worthy of you, whosoever you are; φιλοτιμούμεθα, Rom. ii. 7; 2 Cor. v. 9; other honor, though it have its Hebrew name from *weight*, is all too light, and weighs only with cares and troubles.

*Love the brotherhood.*] There is a love, as we said, due to all, included under that word of *honoring all*, but a peculiar love to our Christian brethren, whom the Apostle Paul calls by a like word, *the household of faith*, Gal. vi. 10.

Christian brethren are united by a threefold cord; two of them are common to other men, but the third is the strongest, and theirs peculiarly. Their bodies are descended of the same man, and their souls of the same God; but their new life, by which they are most entirely brethren, is derived from the same God-man, Jesus Christ; yea, in him, they are all one body, receiving life from him their glorious head, who is called *the firstborn among many brethren*, Romans viii. 29. And as his unspeakable love was the source of this new being and fraternity, so doubtless it can not but produce indissoluble love among them that are partakers of it. The spirit of love and concord is that precious ointment that runs down from the head of our great High Priest to the skirts of his garment. The life of Christ and this law of love are combined, and can not be severed. Can there be enmity between those hearts that meet in him? Why do you pretend yourselves Christians, and yet remain not only strangers to this love, but most contrary to it, *biters and devourers* one of another, and will not be convinced of the great guiltiness and uncomeliness of strifes and envyings among you? Is this the badge that Christ hath left his brethren, to wrangle and malign one another? Do you not know, on the contrary, that they are to be known by mutual love? *By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if ye love one another.* John xiii. 35. How often doth that beloved disciple press this! He

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drank deep of that well-spring of love that was in the breast on which he leaned, and (if they relate aright) he died exhorting this, *Love one another.* Oh! that there was more of this love of Christ in our hearts, arising from the sense of his love to us! That would teach this mutual love more effectually, which the preaching of it may set before us, but, without that other teaching, can not work within us. Why do we still hear these things in vain? Do we believe what the love of Christ did to us, and suffered for us? And will we do nothing for him—not forgive a shadow, a fancy of injury, much less a real one, for his sake, and love him that wronged us, whoever he be, but especially being one of our brethren in this spiritual sense?

Many are the duties of this peculiar fraternal love; that mutual converse, and admonition, and reproof, and comforting, and other duties which are fallen into neglect, not only among formal, but even among real Christians. Let us entreat more of His Spirit who is love, and that will remedy this evil.

*Fear God.*] All the rules of equity and charity among men flow from a higher principle, and depend upon it; and there is no right observing of them without due regard to that: therefore this word, which expresses that principle of obedience, is fitly inserted among these rules; the first obligation of man being to the sovereign majesty of God who made him, and all the mutual duties of one to another being derived from that. A man may indeed, from moral principles, be of a mild inoffensive carriage, and do civil right to all men; but this answers not the Divine rule even in these same things, after the way that it requires them. The spiritual and religious observance of these duties toward men, springs from a respect to God, and terminates there too; it begins and ends in him. And generally, all obedience to his commands, both such as regulate our behavior toward himself immediately, and such as relate to man, doth arise from a holy fear of his name. Therefore, this *fear of God*, upon which follows necessarily *the keeping of his commandments*, is given us by Solomon as the total sum of man's business and duty, Eccl. xii. *ult.*, and so, the way to solid happiness: he pronounces it *totum hominis, the whole of man.* After he had made his discoveries of all things besides under the sun, gone the whole circuit, and made an exact valuation, he found all besides this to amount to nothing *but vanity and vexation of spirit.* The account he gives of all other things, was only for this purpose, to illustrate and establish this truth the more, and to make it the more acceptable; to be a repose after so much weariness, and such a tedious journey, and so, as he speaks there, verse 10, a word of delight as well as a word of truth; that the mind might sit down and quiet itself in this, from the turmoil and pursuit of vanity, that keep it busy to no purpose in all other things. But whereas there was emptiness and vanity, that is, just nothing, in all other things, there was not only something to be found, but everything in this one, this *fear of God*, and that *keeping of his commandments*, which is the proper fruit of that fear. All the repeated declaring of vanity in other things, both severally and altogether in that book, are but so many strokes to drive and fasten this nail (as it is there, ver. 11), this word of wisdom, which is the sum of all, and contains all the rest. So Job, after a large inquest for wisdom, searching for its vein, as men do for mines of silver and gold, hath the return of a *Non inventum est*, from all the creatures: *The sea says, It is not in me*, &c. But in the close, he finds it in this, *The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding.* Job xxviii. *ult.*

Under this fear is comprehended all religion, both inward and outward, all the worship and service of God, and all the observance of his commandments, which is there (Eccl. xii.) and elsewhere expressly joined with it, and therefore is included in it, when it is not expressed. So Job xxviii., as above, *To depart from evil is understanding*, repeating in effect the former words by these. So Psalm cxi. 10. It hath in it all holiness and obedience; they grow all out of it. It is the *beginning*, and it is the top or consummation of *wisdom*, for the word signifies both.

Think it not, then, a trivial, common matter to speak or hear of this subject; but take it as our great lesson and business here on earth. The best proficients in it have yet need to learn it better, and it requires our incessant diligence and study all our days.

This fear hath in it chiefly these things: 1. A reverential esteem of the majesty of God, which is a main, fundamental thing in religion, and moulds the heart most powerfully to the obedience of his will. 2. A firm belief of the purity of God, and of his power and justice, that he loves holiness, and hates all sin, and can and will punish it. 3. A right apprehension of the bitterness of his wrath, and the sweetness of his love; that his incensed anger is the most terrible and intolerable thing in the world, absolutely the most fearful of all evils, and, on the other hand, his love, of all good things the best, the most blessed and delightful, yea, the only blessedness. Life is the name of the sweetest good we know, and yet, his *loving-kindness is better than life*, says David, Psalm lxiii. 3. 4. It supposes, likewise, sovereign love to God, for his own infinite excellency and goodness. 5. From all these springs a most earnest desire to please him in all things, and an unwillingness to offend him in the least, and because of our danger through the multitude and strength of temptations, and our own weakness, a continual self-suspicion, a holy fear lest we should sin, a care and watchfulness that we sin not, and deep

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sorrow, and speedy returning and humbling before him when we have sinned.

There is, indeed, a base kind of fear, which, in the usual distinction, they call *servile fear;* but to account all fear of the judgments and wrath of God a servile fear, or (not to stand upon words), to account such a fear improper to the children of God, I conceive is a wide mistake. Indeed, to fear the punishments of sin, without regard to God and his justice as the inflicter of them, or to forbear to sin only because of those punishments, so that if a man can be secured from those, he hath no other respect to God that would make him fear to offend—this is the character of a slavish and base mind. Again, for a man so to apprehend wrath in relation to himself, as to be still under the horror of it in that notion, and not to apprehend redemption and deliverance by Jesus Christ, is to be under that spirit of bondage, which the apostle speaks of, Rom. viii. 15. And though a child of God may for a time be under such fear, yet, the lively actings of faith and persuasion of God's love, and the feeling of reflex love to him in the soul, do cast it out, according to that word of the apostle, 1 John iv. 18, *True* (or *perfect*) *love casteth out fear.* But to apprehend the punishments which the Lord threatens against sin, as certain and true, and to consider the greatness and fearfulness of them, especially the terror of the Lord's anger and hot displeasure, above all punishments, and (though not only, no, nor chiefly for these, yet), in contemplation of these, as very great and weighty, to be afraid to offend that God who hath threatened such things as the just reward of sin; this, I say, is not incongruous with the estate of the sons of God, yea, it is their duty and their property even thus to fear.

1st. This is the very end for which God hath published these intimations of his justice, and hath threatened to punish men if they transgress, to the end that they may fear and not transgress: so that not to look upon them thus, and not to be affected with them answerably to their design, were a very grievous sin; a slight and disregard put upon the words of the great God.

2dly. Above all others, the children of God have the rightest and clearest knowledge of God, and the deepest belief of his word, and therefore they can not choose but be afraid, and more afraid than all others, to fall under the stroke of his hand. They know more of the greatness, and truth, and justice of God than others, and therefore they fear when he threatens. *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee* (says David), *and I am afraid of thy judgments.* Psalm cxix. 120. Yea, they tremble when they hear the sentence against others, or see it executed upon them; it moves them when they see public executions; *Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men,* says St. Paul, 2 Cor. v. 11; and they cry out with Moses, Psalm xc. 11, *Who knows the power of thine anger? Even according to thy fear so is thy wrath!* It is not an imagination or invention that makes men fear more than they need. His wrath is as terrible as any, that fear it most, can apprehend, and beyond that. So that this doth not only consist with the estate of the saints, but is their very character, *to tremble at the word* of their Lord. The rest neglect what he says, till death and judgment seize on them; but the godly know and believe, that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* Heb. x. 31.

And though they have firm promises, and a *kingdom that can not be shaken,* yet, they have still this *grace by which they serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear;* even in this consideration, that *our God,* even he that is ours by peculiar covenant, *is a consuming fire.* Heb. xii. 28, 29.

But indeed, together with this, yea, more than by this, they are persuaded to fear the Lord, by the sense of his great love to them, and by the power of that love that works in them toward him, and is wrought in them by his. *They shall fear the Lord and his goodness in their latter days.* Hos. iii. 5. In those days, his goodness shall manifest itself more than before: the beams of his love shall break forth more abundantly in the days of the gospel, and shall beat more direct and hotter on the hearts of men; and then, they shall fear him more, because they shall love him more.

This fear agrees well both with faith and love, yea, they work this fear. Compare Psalm xxxi. 23, with Psalm xxxiv. 9, and that same Psalm xxxiv., ver. 8 with ver. 9, and Psalm cxii., ver. 1 with ver. 7. The heart touched with the loadstone of Divine love, ever trembles with this godly fear, and still looks fixedly by faith to that star of Jacob, Jesus Christ, who guides it to the haven of happiness.

The looking upon God in the face of Jesus Christ, takes off that terror of his countenance that drives men from him; and in the smiles of his love that appear through Christ, there is such a power as unites their hearts to him, but *unites* them so, as to *fear his name,* as the psalmist's prayer is, Psalm lxxxvi. 11. He puts such a fear in their hearts as will not cause them to depart from, yea, causes that they *shall not depart from him.* Jer. xxxii. 40.

And this is the purest and highest kind of godly fear, that springs from love: and though it excludes not the consideration of wrath, as terrible in itself, and even some fear of it, yet it may surmount it; and doubtless, where much of that love possesses the heart, it will sometimes drown the other consideration, so that it shall scarcely be perceptible at all, and will constantly set it aside, and will persuade a man purely for the goodness and loveliness of God, to fear to offend him, though there were no interest at all in it

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of a man's own personal misery or happiness.

But do we thus fear the Lord our God? What mean, then, our oaths, and excesses, and uncleanness, our covetousness, and generally our unholy and unchristian conversation? This fear would make men tremble, so as to shake them out of their profane customs, and to shake their beloved sins out of their bosoms. The knowledge of the holy one causes fear of him. Prov. ix. 18.

But alas! we know him not, and therefore we fear him not. Know we but a little of the great majesty of God, how holy he is, and how powerful a punisher of unholiness, we should not dare provoke him thus, who *can kill both body and soul, and cast them into hell*, as our Savior tells us, Matt. x. 28. And he will do so with both, if we will not fear him, because he can do so; and it is told us that we may fear, and so not feel, this heavy wrath. A little lively, spiritual knowledge would go far, and work much, which a great deal, such as ours is, doth not. Some such word as that of Joseph, would do much, being engraven on the heart: *Shall I do this evil and sin against God?* Gen. xxxix. 9. It would make a man be at no more liberty to sin in secret than in public; no, not to dispense with the sin of his thoughts, more than of the openest words or actions. If some grave wise man did see our secret behavior and our thoughts, should we not look more narrowly to them, and not suffer such rovings and follies in ourselves? Surely, therefore, we forget God's eye, which we could not, if we thought of it aright, but should respect it more, than if all men did see within us.

Nor is this the main point to be pressed upon the ungodly only, but the children of God themselves have much need to be put in mind of this fear, and to increase in it. How often do they abuse the indulgence of so loving a Father? They have not their thoughts so constantly full of him, are not *in his fear* (as Solomon advises) *all the day long*, Prov. xxiii. 17, but many times slip out of his directing hand, and wander from him, and do not so deeply fear his displeasure, and so watch over all their ways, as becomes them: they do not keep close by him, and wait on his voice, and obey it constantly, and are not so humbled and afflicted in their repentings for sin, as this fear requires, but only in a slight and superficial degree. They offer much lip-labor, which is but dead service to the living God. These are things, my beloved, that concern us much, and that we ought seriously to lay to heart; for even they who are freed from condemnation, yet if they will walk fearlessly and carelessly at any time, he hath ways enough to make them smart for it. And if there were nothing more, should it not wound them deeply, to think how they requite so great, so unspeakable love?

*Honor the king.*] This was the particular that the apostle pressed and insisted on before; and here he repeats it as a special duty of the second table, and a vindication of religion, which is wrongfully blamed in this point: but of this before.

This is out of question in the general; only in the measure and rule of it, is the difference. And surely they can not possibly be satisfied, who are so drunk with power as to admit of none at all,—no measure nor rate for it, no banks nor channel for those rivers, the hearts and wills of kings to run in, but think that if they like to run over all they may.

This is such a wild conceit as destroys both all law of reason in human societies, and all religious obligation to the laws of God. For the qualification and measure, I shall mention no other than that in the text, that it be always regulated by what here goes before it, *the fear of God;* that we never think of any such obedience and honor due to kings, as crosseth that *fear* which is due to God. Let kings, and subjects, and all know that they are absolutely bound to this. It is spoken to kings, Psalm ii. 11, *Serve the Lord in fear;* and to all men, Psalm ix. 6, *Fear before him, all the earth, for he is great, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods.* What is man in respect of him? Shall a worm, *whose breath is in his nostrils*, stand in competition with the ever-living God? Shall an earthen *potsherd strive with his Maker? Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth;*—let them work one against another, and try which is hardest, and so they shall often break each other;—but, *Wo to him that striveth with his Maker.* Isa. xlv. 9. There is nothing here but certain perishing. As we conclude in the question with the church of Rome, of the honor due to saints and angels, honor let them have, with good reason, but not Divine honor, not God's peculiar: so, in this, *give to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's*, but withal, still *give to God the things that are God's.*

But it is a miserable estate of a kingdom, when debates on this head arise and increase; and their happiness is, when kings and people concur to honor God: *For those that honor him, he will honor, and whosoever despises him, shall be lightly esteemed.* 1 Sam. ii. 30.

VER. 18. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

VER. 19. For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

VER. 20. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently; th' is acceptable with God.

*Thy word* (says the Psalmist) *is a light to my feet and a lamp to my paths*, Psalm cxix. 105;—not only a light to please his eyes, by the excellent truths and comforts that are in it, but withal a lamp to direct his feet in the precepts and rules of life that it gives: not only to inform and delight his mind, but also

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to order his course. That philosopher was deservedly commended, who drew knowledge most this way, and therefore was said to have brought philosophy from the clouds to dwell among men, calling it from empty speculations to a practical strain. Thus we are taught in spiritual knowledge by the word of God. The Son, the eternal word, when he came to dwell with men, and so brought life, and wisdom, and all blessings from the heavens down unto them, taught them both by his doctrine and perfect example, how to walk; and his apostles do, conformably, aim at this in their holy writings, joining with the mysteries of faith, those rules of life which show men the straight way to happiness.

And as it is spoken of the largeness of Solomon's wisdom, that *he spake of all trees, from the cedar in Lebanon, to the hyssop that grows out of the wall* (1 Kings iv. 33), so in this, we may see the perfection of the holy Scriptures, that they give those directions that are needful to all ranks and sorts of men. They speak not only of the duties of kings, how they ought to behave themselves on their thrones, and the duty of their subjects toward them in that dignity, and how ministers and others ought to carry themselves in the *house of God;* but they come into private houses, and give economic rules for them; teaching parents, and children, and masters, yea, and servants, how to acquit themselves one to another. Thus here, *servants be subject to your masters.*

As this is a just plea for all the people of God, that they have a right to the use of this Book, being so useful for all sorts, and that they ought not to be debarred from it; so, it is a just plea against a great part of those that debar themselves the use of it, through slothfulness and earthly mindedness, seeing it is so contempered, that there may be many things, yea, all the main things in it profitable for all, fitted to the use of the lowest estate and lowest capacities of men. Yea, it takes (as we see) particular notice of their condition; stoops down to take the meanest servant by the hand, to lead him in the way to heaven; and not only in that part of it which is the general way of Christians, but even in those steps of it that lie within the walk of their particular calling; as here, teaching not only the duties of a Christian, but of a *Christian servant.*

Obs. 1. The Scriptures are a deep that few can wade far into, and none can wade through (as those waters, Ezek. lxvii. 5), but yet, all may come to the brook and refresh themselves with drinking of the streams of its living water, and go in a little way, according to their strength and stature. Now this (I say) may be spoken to our shame, and I wish it might shame you to amendment, that so many of you either use not the Scriptures at all, or, in using, do not use them; you turn over the leaves, and, it may be, run through the lines, and consider not what they advise you. Masters, learn your part, and servants too, hearken what they say to you, for they pass not you by, they vouchsafe to speak to you too, but you vouchsafe not to hear them, and observe their voice. How can you think that the reading of this Book concerns you not, when you may hear it address such particular directions to you? Wisdom goes not only to the gates of palaces, but to the common gates of the cities, and to the public highways, and calls to the simplest that she may make them wise. Besides that you dishonor God, you prejudice yourselves; for does not that neglect of God and his word justly procure the disorder and disobedience of your servants toward you, as a fit punishment from his righteous hand, although they are unrighteous, and are procuring further judgment to themselves in so doing? And not only thus is your neglect of the word a cause of your trouble by the justice of God, but it is so in regard of the nature of the word, inasmuch as if you would respect it, and make use of it in your houses, it would teach your servants to respect and obey you, as here you see it speaks for you; and therefore you wrong both it and yourselves, when you silence it in your families.

Obs. 2. The apostle having spoken of subjection to public authority, adds this of subjection to private domestic authority. It is a thing of much concernment, the right ordering of families; for all other societies, civil and religious, are made up of these. Villages, and cities, and churches, and commonwealths, and kingdoms, are but a collection of families; and therefore such as these are, for the most part, such must the whole societies predominantly be. One particular house is but a very small part of a kingdom, yet, the wickedness and lewdness of that house, be it but of the meanest in it, of servants one or more, and though it seem but a small thing, yet goes in to make up that heap of sin which provokes the wrath of God, and draws on public calamity.

And this particularly, when it declines into disorder, proves a public evil. When servants grow generally corrupt, and disobedient, and unfaithful, though they be the lowest part, yet the whole body of a Commonwealth can not but feel very much the evi of it; as a man does when his legs and feet grow diseased, and begin to fail him.

We have here, 1. Their duty. 2. The due extent of it. 3. The right principle of it.

1st. Their duty, *be subject.* Keep your order and station under your masters, and that *with fear*, and inward reverence of mind and respect to them; for that is the very life of all obedience. Then their obedience hath in it diligent doing, and patient suffering; both these are in that word, *be subject.* Do faithfully to your utmost that which is in trusted to you, and obey all their just commands, for action indeed goes no further; bu

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suffer patiently even their utmost rigors and severities. And this being the harder part of the two, and yet, a part that the servants of those times bore, many of them being more hardly and slavishly used than any with us (especially those that were Christian servants under unchristian masters), therefore the apostle insists most on this. And this is the extent of the obedience here required, that it be paid to all kinds of masters, *not to the good only, but also to the evil;* not only to obey, but to suffer, and suffer patiently, and not only deserved, but even wrongful and unjust punishment.

Now because this particular concerns servants, let them reflect upon their own carriage and examine it by this rule; and truly the greatest part of them will be found very unconformable to it, being either closely fraudulent and deceitful, or grossly stubborn and disobedient, abusing the lenity and mildness of their masters, or murmuring at their just severity. So far are they from the patient endurance of the least undue word of reproof, much less of sharper punishment, either truly, or, in their opinion, undeserved. And truly, if any who profess religion, dispense with this in themselves, they mistake the matter very much; for religion ties them the more, whether children or servants, to be most submissive and obedient even to the worst kind of parents and masters, *always in the Lord;* not obeying any unjust command, though they may and ought to suffer patiently (as it is here) their unjust reproofs or punishments.

But on the other side, this does not justify, nor at all excuse the unmerciful austerities and unbridled passion of masters; it is still a perverseness and crookedness in them, as the word is here, σκολιοῖς, and must have its own name, and shall have its proper reward from the sovereign Master and Lord of all the world.

2dly. There is here, also, the due extent of this duty, namely, *To the froward.* It is a more deformed thing, to have a distorted, crooked mind, or a froward spirit, than any crookedness of the body. How can he that hath servants under him expect their obedience, when he can not command his own passion, but is a slave to it? And unless much conscience of duty possess servants (more than is commonly to be found with them), it can not but work a master into such disaffection and disesteem with them, when he is of a turbulent spirit, a *troubler of his own house,* imbittering his affairs and commands with rigidness and passion, and ready to take things by that side which may offend and trouble him, thinking his servant slights his call, when he may as well think he hears him not, and upon every slight occasion, real or imagined, flying out into reproachful speeches, or proud threats, contrary to the apostle St. Paul's rule, which he sets over against the duty of servants: *Forbearing threatening, knowing that your Master also is in heaven, and that there is no respect of persons with him.* Eph. vi. 9. Think, therefore, when ye shall appear before the judgment-seat of God, that your carriage shall be examined and judged as well as theirs; and think, that though we regard much those differences of masters and servants, yet they are nothing with God, they vanish away in his presence.

Consider *who made thee to differ.* Might he not, with a turn of his hand, have made your stations just contrary, have made thee the servant, and thy servant the master? But we willingly forget those things that should compose our mind to humility and meekness, and blow them up with such fancies as please and feed our natural vanity, and make us somebody in our own account.

However that Christian servant who falls into the hands of a froward master, will not be beaten out of his station and duty of obedience by all the hard and wrongful usage he meets with, but will take that as an opportunity of exercising the more obedience and patience, and will be the more cheerfully patient, because of his innocence, as the apostle here exhorts.

Men do indeed look sometimes upon this as a just plea for impatience, that they suffer unjustly, which yet is very ill logic; for, as the philosopher said, "Would any man that frets because he suffers unjustly, wish to deserve it, that he might be patient?" Now, to hear them, they seem to speak so, when they exclaim, that the thing that vexeth them most, is, that they have not deserved any such thing as is inflicted on them. Truly, desert of punishment may make a man more silent upon it, but innocence, rightly considered, makes him more patient. Guiltiness stops a man's mouth, indeed, in suffering, but surely it doth not quiet his mind; on the contrary, it is that which mainly disturbs and grieves him; it is the sting of suffering, as sin is said to be of death, 1 Cor. xv. 56. And therefore, when there is no guilt, the pain of suffering can not but be much abated; yea, the apostle here declares, that to suffer undeserved, and withal patiently, is glorious to a man, and acceptable to God. It is commendable, indeed, to be truly patient even in deserved sufferings, but the deserving them tarnishes the lustre of that patience, and makes it look more like restraint; which is the apostle's meaning, in preferring spotless suffering much before it. And this is indeed the true glory of it, that it pleaseth God (so it is rendered in the close of the 20th verse, for the other word of *glory* in the beginning of it); it is a pleasing thing in God's eyes, and therefore he will thank a man for it, as the word is χάρις παρὰ Θεῷ. Though we owe all our patience under all kinds of afflictions as a duty to him, and though this grace is his own gift, yet he hath obliged himself by his royal word, not only to accept of it, but

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to praise it and reward it in his children. Though they lose their thanks at the world's hands, and be rather scoffed at and taunted in all their doings and sufferings, it is no matter; they can expect no other there; but their *reward is on high*, in the sure and faithful hand of their Lord.

How often do men work earnestly, and do and suffer much for the uncertain wages of glory and thanks among men! And how many of them fall short of their reckoning, either dying before they come to that state where they think to find it, or not finding it where they looked for it, and so they live but to feel the pain of their disappointment! Or, if they do attain their end, such glory and thanks as men have to give them, what amounts it to? Is it any other than a handful of nothing, the breath of their mouths, and themselves much like it, a vapor dying out in the air? The most real thanks they give, their solidest rewards, are but such as a man can not take home with him: or if they go so far with him, yet, at farthest, he must leave them at the door, when he is to enter his everlasting home. All the riches, and palaces, and monuments of honor, that he had, and that are erected to him after death, as if he had then some interest in them, reach him not at all. Enjoy them who will, he does not, *he hath no portion of all that is done under the sun;* his own end is to him the end of the world.

But he that would have abiding glory and thanks, must turn his eye another way for them. All men desire glory, but they know neither what it is, nor how it is to be sought. He is upon the only right bargain of this kind, *whose praise* (according to St. Paul's word) *is not of men, but of God.* Rom. ii. 29. If men commend him not, he accounts it no loss, nor any gain if they do; for he is bound for a country where that coin goes not, and whither he can not carry it, and therefore he gathers it not. That which he seeks in all, is, that he may be approved and accepted of God, whose thanks is no less, to the least of those he accepts, than a crown of unfading glory. Not a poor *servant* that fears his name, and is obedient and patient for his sake, but shall be so rewarded.

There be some kind of graces and good actions, which men (such as regard any grace) take special notice of, and commend highly—such as are of a magnific and remarkable nature, as martyrdom, or doing or suffering for religion in some public way. There be again, other obscure graces, which, if men despise them not, yet they esteem not much, as meekness, gentleness, and patience under private crosses, known to few or none. And yet, these are of great account with God, and therefore should be so with us; these are indeed of more universal use, whereas the other are but for high times, as we say, for rare occasions: these are every one's work, but few are called to the acting of the other. And the least of these graces shall not lose its reward, in whose person soever, as St. Paul tells us, speaking of this same subject, *Knowing that whatsoever good any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.* Eph. vi. 8.

This is the bounty of that great Master we serve. For what are we and all we can do, that there should be the name of reward attached to it? Yet he keeps all in reckoning; not a poor lame prayer, not a tear nor a sigh poured forth before him, shall be lost. Not any cross, whether from his own hand immediately, or coming through men's hands, that is taken, what way soever it come, as out of his hand, and carried patiently, yea, and welcomed, and embraced for his sake, but he observes our so entertaining of it. Not an injury that the meanest servant bears Christianly, but goes upon account with him. And he sets them down so, as that they bear much value through his estimate and way of reckoning of them, though in themselves they are all less than nothing; as a worthless counter stands for hundreds or thousands, according to the place you set it in. Happy they who have to deal with such a Lord, and who, be they servants or masters, are vowed servants to him! *When he comes, his reward shall be with him.* Rev. xxii. 12.

The third thing is, the principle of this obedience and patience. *For conscience toward God.* This imports, first, the knowledge of God, and of his will in some due measure, and then a conscientious respect unto him and his will so known, taking it for their only rule in doing and suffering.

Observe, 1. This declares to us the freeness of the grace of God in regard to men's outward quality, that he doth often bestow the riches of his grace upon persons of mean condition. It is supposed here, that this *conscience toward God*, this saving knowledge and fear of his name, is to be found in servants: therefore the apostle takes them within the address of his letter among those who are *elect, according to the foreknowledge of God* (ch. i. 2), and sharers of those dignities he mentions (ch. ii. 9), *a chosen generation.* The honor of a spiritual royalty may be concealed under the meanness of a servant; and this grace may be conferred upon the servant, and denied to the master, as is here supposed. It may fall out that a perverse crooked-minded master may have a servant uprightly minded, being endowed with a tender conscience toward God. And thus the Lord does to counteract the pride of man, and to set off the lustre of his own free grace. He hath all to choose from, and yet chooses where men would least imagine. See Matthew xi. 25; 1 Cor. i. 27.

Observe, 2. Grace finds a way to exert itself in every estate where it exists, and regulates the soul according to the particular duties of that estate. Whether it find a man high or low, a master or servant, it requires

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not a change of his station, but works a change on his heart, and teaches him how to live in it. The same spirit that makes a Christian master pious, and gentle, and prudent in commanding, makes a Christian servant faithful, and obsequious and diligent in obeying. A skilful engraver makes you a statue indifferently of wood, or stone, or marble, as they are put into his hand; so, grace forms a man to a Christian way of walking in any estate. There is a way for him in the meanest condition to glorify God, and to adorn the profession of religion; no estate so low as to be shut out from that; and a rightly-informed and rightly-affected conscience toward God, shows a man that way, and causes him to walk in it. As the astrologers say that the same stars that made Cyrus to be chosen king among the armies of men when he came to be a man, made him to be chosen king among the shepherd's children when he was a child; thus grace will have its proper operation in every estate.

In this, men readily deceive themselves; they can do anything well in imagination, better than the real task that is in their hands. They presume that they could do God good service in some place of command, who serve him not, as becomes them, in that which is by far the easier, the place of obeying wherein he hath set them. They think that if they had the ability and opportunities that some men have, they would do much more for religion, and for God, than they do; and yet they do nothing, but spoil a far lower part than that which is their own, and is given them to study and act aright in. But our folly and self-ignorance abuses us: it is not our part to choose what we should be, but to be what we are, to his glory who gives us to be such. Be thy condition never so mean, yet, thy *conscience toward God*, if it be within thee, will find itself work in that. If it be little that is intrusted to thee, in regard of thy outward condition, or any other way, *be thou faithful in that little*, as our Savior speaks, and thy reward shall not be little: *He shall make thee ruler over much.* Matt. xxv. 23.

Observe, 3. As a corrupt mind debaseth the best and most excellent callings an actions, so the lowest are raised above themselves, and ennobled by a spiritual mind. Magistrates or ministers, though their calling and employments be high, may have low intentions, and draw down their high calling to those low intentions; they may seek themselves, and their own selfish ends, and neglect God. And a sincere Christian may elevate his low calling by this conscience toward God, observing his will, and intending his glory in it. An eagle may fly high, and yet have its eye down upon some carrion on the earth: even so, a man may be standing on the earth, and on some low part of it, and yet have his eye upon heaven, and be contemplating it. That which men can not at all see in one another, is the very thing that is most considerable in their actions, namely the principle whence they flow, and the end to which they tend. This is the form and life of actions—that by which they are earthly or heavenly. Whatsoever be the matter of them, the spiritual mind hath that alchymy indeed, of turning base metals into gold, earthly employments into heavenly. The handiwork of an artisan or servant who regards God, and eyes him even in that work, is much holier than the *prayer of a hypocrite;* and a servant's enduring the private wrongs and harshness of a froward master, bearing it patiently *for conscience toward God*, is more acceptable to God, than the sufferings of such as may endure much for a public good cause, without a good and upright heart.

This habitude and posture of the heart toward God, the Apostle St. Paul presses much upon servants, Eph. vi. 8, as being very needful to allay the hard labor and harsh usage of many of them. This is the way to make all easy, to undergo it for God. There is no pill so bitter, but respect and love to God will sweeten it. And this is a very great refreshment and comfort to Christians in the mean estate of servants and other laboring men, that they may offer up their hardship and bodily labor as a sacrifice to God, and say, "Lord, this is the station wherein thou hast set me in this world, and I desire to serve thee in it. What I do is for thee, and what I suffer I desire to bear patiently and cheerfully for thy sake, in submission and obedience to thy will."

*For conscience.*] In this there is, 1. A reverential compliance with God's disposal, both in allotting to them that condition of life, and in particularly choosing their master for them; though possibly not the mildest and pleasantest, yet the fittest for their good. There is much in firmly believing this, and in heartily submitting to it; for we would, naturally, rather carve for ourselves, and shape our own estate to our mind, which is a most foolish, yea, an impious presumption: as if we were wiser than he who hath done it, and as if there were not as much, and, it may be, more possibility of true contentment in a mean, than in a far higher condition! The master's mind is often more toiled than the servant's body. But if our condition be appointed us, at least we would have a voice in some qualifications and circumstances of it; as in this, if a man must serve, he would wish willingly that God would allot him a meek, gentle master. And so, in other things, if we must be sick, we would be well accommodated, and not want helps; but to have sickness, and want means and friends for our help, this we can not think of without horror But this submission to God is never right till all that concerns us be given up into his hand to do with it, and with every article and circumstance of it, as seems good in his eyes 2. In this *conscience*, there is a religious and observant respect to the rule which God hath

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set men to walk by in that condition: so that their obedience depends not upon any external inducement, failing when that fails, but flows from an inward impression of the law of God upon the heart. Thus, a servant's obedience and patience will not be pinned to the goodness and equity of his master, but when that fails, will subsist upon its own inward ground; and so, generally, in all other estates. This is the thing that makes sure and constant walking; makes a man *step even* in the ways of God. When a man's obedience springs from that unfailing, unchanging reason, the command of God, it is a natural motion, and therefore keeps on, and rather grows than abates; but they who are moved by things outward, must often fail, because those things are not constant in their moving; as, for instance, when a people are much acted on by the spirit of their rulers, as the Jews when they had good kings. 3. In this *conscience*, there is a tender care of the glory of God, and the adornment of religion, which the apostle premised before these particular duties, as a thing to be specially regarded in them. The honor of our Lord's name, is that which we should set up as the mark to aim all our actions at. But, alas! either we think not on it, or our hearts slip out, and start from their aim, *like bows of deceit*, as the word is, Ps. lxxviii. 57. 4. There is the comfortable persuasion of God's approbation and acceptance (as it is expressed in the following verse, of which somewhat before), and the hope of that reward he hath promised, as it is, Col. iii. 24: *Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ.* No less than *the inheritance!* So, then, such servants as these are *sons and heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ.* Thus he that is a servant, may be in a far more excellent state than his master. The servant may hope for, and aim at a kingdom, while the master is embracing a dunghill. And such a one will think highly of God's free grace, and the looking ever to that inheritance makes him go cheerfully through all pains and troubles here, as *light* and *momentary*, and not worth the naming in comparison of *that glory that shall be revealed.* In the meantime, the best and most easy condition of the sons of God can not satisfy them, nor stay their sighs and *groans, waiting* and longing for *that day of their full redemption.* Rom. viii. 16, 23.

Now this is the great rule, not only for servants, but for all the servants of God in what state soever, *to set the Lord always before them*, Psalm xvi. 8, and to study with St. Paul, *to have a conscience void of offence toward God and man*, Acts xxiv. 16; to eye, and to apply constantly to their actions and their inward thoughts, the command of God; to walk by that rule abroad, and at home in their houses, and in the several ways of their calling (as an exact workman is ever and anon laying his rule to his work, and squaring it); and *for the conscience they have toward God*, to do and suffer his will cheerfully in everything, being content that he choose their condition and their trials for them; only desirous to be assured that he hath chosen them for his own, and given them a right to the *glorious liberty of the sons of God*, Rom. viii. 21; still endeavoring to walk in that way which leads to it, overlooking *this moment*, and all things in it, accounting it a very indifferent matter what is their outward state here, provided they may be happy in eternity. Whether we be high or low here, bond or free, it imports little, seeing that all these differences will be so quickly at an end, and there shall not be so much as any track or footstep of them left. With particular men, it is so in their graves; you may distinguish the greater from the less by their tombs, but by their dust you can not: and with the whole world it shall be so in the end. All monuments and palaces, as well as cottages, shall be made fire, as our apostle tells us. *The elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and all the works therein, shall be burnt up.* 2 Pet. iii. 10.

VER. 21. For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

VER. 22. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

VER. 23. Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.

THE rules that God hath set men to live by, are universally just, and there is a universal obligation upon all men to believe them; but as they are particularly addressed to his own people in his word, *they*, out of question, are particularly bound to yield obedience, and have many peculiar persuasives to it, not extending to others, which are therefore usually represented to them, and pressed upon them, in the holy Scriptures. Thus the preface of the law runs to Israel: Besides that *I am Jehovah*, and have supreme power to give men laws, it is added, *I am thy God*, especially thy deliverer from slavery and bondage, and so have a peculiar right to thy obedience. Deut. vii. 6. Thus, the apostle here urgeth this point in hand, of inoffensiveness and patience, particularly in Christian servants, but so as it fits every Christian in his station, *For hereunto*, says he, *ye are called.* Whatsoever others do, though they think it too straight a rule, yet you are tied to it by your own calling and profession as you are Christians; and this is evidently the highest and clearest reason that can be, and of greatest power with a Christian, namely, the example of Jesus Christ himself: *For Christ also suffered for us*, &c.

So, it is all but one entire argument, *viz.* that they ought thus to behave themselves, because it is the very thing they are called to, as their conformity to Jesus Christ, whose they profess to be, yea, with whom, as

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Christians, they profess themselves to be one.

*Hereunto were ye called.*] This, in the general, is a thing that ought to be ever before our eye, to consider the nature and end of our calling, and to endeavor in all things to act suitably to it; to think in every occurrence, What doth the calling of a Christian require of me in this? But the truth is, the most do not mind this. We profess ourselves to be Christians, and never think what kind of behavior this obliges us to, and what manner of persons it becomes us to be *in all holy conversation*, but *walk disorderly*, out of our rank, *inordinately*. You that are profane, were you called by the gospel to serve the world and your lusts? Were you called to swearing and rioting and voluptuousness? Hear you not the apostle testifying the contrary, in express terms, that *God hath not called us to uncleanness but unto holiness?* 1 Thess. iv. 7. You that are of proud contentious spirits, do you act suitably to this holy calling? No, for *we are called to peace*, says the same apostle. 1 Cor. vii. 15. But we study not this holy calling, and therefore, we walk so incongruously, so unlike the gospel: *we lie and do not the truth*, as St. John speaks, 1 John i. 6: our actions belie us.

The particular things that Christians are here said to be called to, are, *suffering*, as their lot, *and patience*, as their duty, even under the most unjust and undeserved sufferings.

And both these are as large as the sphere of this calling. Not only servants and others of a mean condition, who, lying low, are the more subject to rigors and injuries, but generally, all who are called to godliness, are likewise called to sufferings. 2 Tim. iii. 12. All that will follow Christ, must do it in his livery; they must take up their cross. This is a very harsh and unpleasing article of the gospel to a carnal mind, but the Scriptures conceal it not. Men are not led blindfold into sufferings, and drawn into a hidden snare by the gospel's invitations; they are told it very often, that they may not pretend a surprisal, nor have any just plea for starting back again. So our Savior tells his disciples, why he was so express and plain with them in this, *These things have I told you that ye be not offended*, John xvi. 1; as if he had said, I have showed you the ruggedness of your way, that you may not stumble at it, taking it to be a smooth plain one. But then, where this is spoken of, it is usually allayed with the mention of those comforts that accompany these sufferings, or that glory which follows them. The doctrine of the apostles, which was so verified in their own persons, was this, *That we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God*, Acts xiv. 22. An unpleasant way indeed, if you look no farther; but a *kingdom* at the end of it, and that *the kingdom of God*, will transfuse pleasure into the most painful step in it all. It seems a sad condition that falls to the share of godly men in this world, to be eminent in sorrows and troubles. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous*, Psalm xxxiv. 19: but that which follows, weighs them abundantly down in consolation, that the Lord himself is engaged in their afflictions, both for their deliverance out of them in due time, and, in the mean time, for their support and preservation under them: *The Lord delivers them out of them all*, and till he does that, *he keepeth all their bones*. This was literally verified in the natural body of Christ, as St. John observes, John xix. 36, and it holds spiritually true in his mystical body. The Lord supports the spirits of believers in their troubles, with such solid consolations as are the pillars and strength of their souls, as the bones are of the body, which the Hebrew word for them imports. So, *he keepeth all his bones;* and the desperate condition of wicked men is opposed to this, verse 21, to illustrate it, *evil shall slay the wicked*.

Thus, John xvi. 33, they are forewarned in the close, what to expect at the world's hands, as they were divers times before in that same sermon; but it is a sweet testament, take it altogether; *Ye shall have tribulation in the world, but peace in me*. And seeing he hath jointly bequeathed these two to his followers, were it not great folly to renounce such a bargain, and to let go that peace for fear of this trouble? The trouble is but *in the world*, but the *peace* is *in him*, who weighs down thousands of worlds.

So then, they do exceedingly mistake and misreckon, who would reconcile Christ and the world, who would have the church of Christ, or, at least, themselves for their own shares, enjoy both kinds of peace together; would willingly have peace in Christ, but are very loath to part with the world's peace. They would be Christians, but they are very ill satisfied when they hear of anything but ease and prosperity in that estate, and willingly forget the tenor of the gospel in this; and so, when times of trouble and sufferings come, their minds are as new and uncouth to it, as if they had not been told of it beforehand. They like better St. Peter's carnal advice to Christ, to avoid suffering, Matt. xvi. 22, than his apostolic doctrine to Christians, teaching them, that as Christ *suffered*, so they likewise *are called to suffering*. Men are ready to think as Peter did, that Christ should favor himself more in his own body, his church, than to expose it to so much suffering; and most would be of Rome's mind in this, at least in affection, that the badge of the church should be pomp and prosperity, and not the cross: the true cross and afflictions are too heavy and painful.

But *God's thoughts are not as ours:* those whom he calls to a kingdom, he calls to sufferings as the way to it. He will have the heirs of heaven know, that they are not at home on earth, and that *this is not their rest*

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He will not have them, with the abused world, fancy a happiness here, and, as St. Augustine says, *Beatam vitam quærere in regione mortis*—seek a happy life in the region of death. The reproaches and wrongs that encounter them shall elevate their minds often to that land of peace and rest, *where righteousness dwells.* 2 Peter iii. 13. The hard taskmaster shall make them weary of Egypt, which otherwise, possibly, they would comply too well with; shall dispose them for deliverance, and make it welcome, which, it may be, they might but coldly desire, if they were better used.

He knows what he does, who secretly serves his own good purposes by men's evil ones, and, by the *ploughers that make long furrows* on the back of his church (Psalm cxxix. 3), makes it a fruitful field to himself. Therefore, it is great folly and unadvisedness, to take up a prejudice against his way, to think it might be better as we would model it, and to complain of the order of things, whereas we should complain of disordered minds: but we had rather have all altered and changed for us, the very course of Providence, than seek the change of our own perverse hearts. But the right temper of a Christian is, to run always across to the corrupt stream of the world and human iniquity, and to be willingly carried along with the stream of divine Providence, and not at all to stir a hand, no, nor a thought, to row against that mighty current; and not only is he carried with it upon necessity, because there is no steering against it, but cheerfully and voluntarily; not because he must, but because he would.

And this is the other thing to which Christians are jointly called; as to suffering, so to *calmness of mind* and *patience in suffering*, although their suffering be most unjust: yea, this is truly a part of that duty they are called to, to maintain that integrity and inoffensiveness of life that may make their sufferings at men's hands always unjust. The entire duty here, is innocence and patience; doing willingly no wrong to others, and yet cheerfully suffering wrong when done to themselves. If either of the two be wanting, their suffering does not credit their profession, but dishonors it. If they be patient under deserved suffering, their guiltiness darkens their patience: and if their sufferings be undeserved, yea, and the cause of them honorable, yet impatience under them stains both their sufferings and their cause, and seems in part to justify the very injustice that is used against them; but when innocence and patience meet together in suffering, their sufferings are in their perfect lustre. These are they who honor religion, and shame the enemies of it. It was the concurrence of these two that was the very triumph of the martyrs in times of persecution, that tormented their tormentors, and made them *more than conquerors*, even in sufferings.

Now that we are called both to suffering and to this manner of suffering, the apostle puts out of question, by the supreme example of our Lord Jesus Christ; for the sum of our calling is, *to follow him.* Now in both these, in suffering, and in suffering innocently and patiently, the whole history of the gospel testifies how complete a pattern he is. And the apostle gives us here a summary, yet a very clear account of it.

The words have in them these two things, I. The perfection of this example. II. Our obligation to follow it.

I. The example he sets off to the full, 1. In regard of the greatness of our Savior's sufferings. 2. In regard of his spotlessness and patience in suffering.

The first, we have in that word, *he suffered;* and afterward, at ver. 24, we have his crucifixion and his stripes expressly specified.

Now this is reason enough, and carries it it beyond all other reason, why Christians are called to a suffering life, seeing the Lord and Author of that calling suffered himself so much. *The captain*, or leader, *of our salvation*, as the apostle speaks, was *consecrated by suffering*, Heb. ii. 10: that was the way by which *he entered into the holy place*, where he is now *our everlasting High Priest, making intercession for us.* If he be our leader to salvation, must not we follow him in the way he leads, whatsoever it is? If it be (as we see it is) by the way of sufferings, we must either follow on in that way, or fall short of salvation; for there is no other leader, nor any other way than that which he opened; so that there is not only a congruity in it, that his followers be conformed to him in suffering, but a necessity, if they will follow him on, till they attain to glory. And the consideration of both these, can not but argue a Christian into a resolution for this *via regia*, this royal way of suffering that leads to glory, through which their King and Lord himself went to his glory. It could hardly be believed at first, that this was *his* way, and we can as hardly yet believe that it must be ours. *O fools, and slow of heart to believe! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory?* Luke xxiv. 25, 26.

Would you be at glory, and will you not follow your leader in the only way to it? Must there be another way cut out for you by yourself? O absurd! *Shall the servant be greater than his master?* John xiii. 6. Are you not fairly dealt with? If you have a mind to Christ, you shall have full as much of the world's good-will as he had: *if it hate you*, he bids you remember, *how it hated him.* John xv. 18.

But though there were a way to do otherwise, would you not, if the love of Christ possessed your hearts, rather choose to share with him in his lot, and would you not find delight in the very trouble of it? Is not this



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conformity to Jesus, the great ambition of all his true-hearted followers? *We carry about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus*, says the great apostle, 2 Cor. iv. 10. Besides the unspeakable advantage to come, which goes linked with this, that *if we suffer with him, we shall reign with him* (2 Tim. ii. 12), there is a glory, even in this present resemblance, that we are conformed to the image of the Son of God in sufferings. Why should we desire to leave him? Are you not one with him? Can you choose but have the same common friends and enemies? Would you willingly, if it might be, could you find in your heart to be friends with that world which hated your Lord and Master? Would you have nothing but kindness and ease, where he had nothing but enmity and trouble? Or would you not rather, when you think aright of it, refuse and disdain to be so unlike him? As that good duke said, when they would have crowned him king of Jerusalem, *No*, said he, *by no means, I will not wear a crown of gold where Jesus was crowned with thorns.*

2. His spotlessness and patience in suffering, are both of them set here before us; the one ver. 22, the other ver. 23.

Whosoever thou art who makest such a noise about the injustice of what thou sufferest, and thinkest to justify thy impatience by thine innocence, let me ask thee, Art thou more just and innocent than he who is here set before thee? Or, art thou able to come near him in this point? *Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* This is to signify perfect holiness, according to that declaration, James iii. 2, *If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.* Man is a little world, a world of wickedness; and that little part of him, *the tongue*, is termed by St. James *a world of iniquity.* But all Christ's words, as well as his actions, and all his thoughts, flowed from a pure spring that had not anything defiled in it; and therefore no temptation, either from men or Satan, could seize on him. Other men may seem clear as long as they are unstirred, but move and trouble them, and the mud arises; but he was nothing but holiness, a pure fountain, all purity to the bottom; and therefore stir and trouble him as they would, he was still alike clear. *The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.* John xiv. 39.

This is the main ground of our confidence in him, that he is *a holy, harmless, undefiled High Priest:* and *such a one became us*, says the apostle, who are so sinful. Heb. vii. 26. The more sinful we are, the more need that our High Priest should be sinless; and being so, we may build upon his perfection, as standing in our stead, yea, we are invested with him and his righteousness.

Again, *there was no guile found in his mouth.* This serves to convince us concerning all the promises that he hath made, that they are nothing but truth. Hath he said, *Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out?* John vi. 37. Then you need not fear, how unworthy and vile soever you may be; do but come to him, and you have his word that he will not shut the door against you. And as he hath promised access, so he hath further promised ease and soul's rest to those that come, Matt. xi. 30. Then be confident to find that in him too, for there never was a false or guileful word found in his mouth.

But to consider it only in the present action, this speaks him the most innocent sufferer that ever was, not only judicially just in his cause, but entirely just in his person, altogether righteous; and yet, condemned to death, and an opprobrious death of malefactors, and set between two, as chief of the three! *I am*, says he, *the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valley;* and the Spouse saith of him, *My well-beloved is white and ruddy*, Cant. ii. 1, 10: thus indeed, he was in his death, ruddy in his bloodshed, and white in his innocence, and withal in his meekness and patience; the other thing wherein he is here so exemplary.

*Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again.*] This spotless Lamb of God, was a Lamb both in guiltlessness and silence; and the prophet Isaiah expresses the resemblance, in that *he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter*, Isa. liii. 7. He suffered not only an unjust sentence of death, but withal unjust revilings, *the contradictions of sinners.* No one ever did so little deserve revilings; no one ever could have said so much in his own just defence, and to the just reproach of his enemies; and yet, in both, he preferred silence. No one could ever threaten so heavy things as he could against his enemies, and have made good all he threatened, and yet no such thing was heard from him. The heavens and the earth, as it were, spoke their resentment of his death who made them; but he was silent; or what he spoke makes this still good, how far he was from revilings and threatenings. As spices pounded, or precious ointment poured out, give their smell most, thus, *His name was an ointment* then *poured forth*, together with his blood (Cant. i. 3), and filling heaven and earth with its sweet perfume, was a savor of rest and peace in both, appeasing the wrath of God, and so quieting the consciences of men. And even in this particular was it then most fragrant, in that all the torments of the cross, and all the revilings of the multitude, racked him as it were for some answer, yet could draw no other from him than this, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

But for those to whom this mercy belonged not, the apostle tells us what he did; instead of revilings and threatenings, *He committed all to him who judgeth righteously.* And this is the true method of Christian patience, that which quiets the mind, and keeps it from the boiling, tumultuous thoughts of revenge,

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to turn the whole matter into God's hand, to resign it over to him, to prosecute when and as he thinks good. Not as the most, who had rather, if they had power, do for themselves, and be their own avengers; and because they have not the power, do offer up such bitter curses and prayers for revenge unto God, as are most hateful to him, and are far from this calm and holy way of committing matters to his judgment. The common way of referring things to God, is indeed impious and dishonorable to him, being really no other than calling him to be a servant and executioner to our passion. We ordinarily mistake his justice, and judge of it according to our own precipitant and distempered minds. If wicked men be not crossed in their designs, and their wickedness evidently crushed, just when we should have it, we are ready to give up the matter as desperate, or at least to abate of those confident and reverential thoughts of Divine justice which we owe him. Howsoever things go, this ought to be fixed in our hearts, that *He who sitteth in heaven* judgeth righteously, and executes that his righteous judgment in the fittest season. We poor worms, whose whole life is but a *hand-breadth* in itself, and is *as nothing* unto God, think a few months or years a great matter; but to him who *inhabiteth eternity, a thousand years are but as one day*, as our apostle teaches us, in his second epistle, chap. iii. 8.

Our Savior in that time of his humiliation and suffering, committed himself and his cause (for that is best expressed, in that nothing is expressed but *He committed*) *to him who judgeth righteously*, and the issue shall be, that *all his enemies shall become his footstool*, and he himself shall judge them. But that which is given us here to learn from his carriage toward them in his suffering, is, that quietness and moderation of mind, even under unjust sufferings, make us like him: not to reply to reproach with reproach, as our custom is, to give one ill word for another, or two for one, to be sure not to be behind. Men take a pride in this, and think it ridiculous simplicity so to suffer, and this makes strifes and contention so much abound; but it is a great mistake. You think it greatness of spirit to bear nothing, to put up with no wrong, whereas indeed it is great weakness, and baseness. It is true greatness of spirit to despise the most of those things which set you usually on fire one against another; especially, being done after a Christian manner, it were a part of the spirit of Christ in you: and is there any spirit greater than that, think you? Oh! that there were less of the spirit of the dragon, and more of the spirit of the dove among them.

II. Our obligation to follow the example of Christ, besides being enforced by its own excellency, is intimated in these two things contained in the words: 1. The design of his behavior for this use, to be as an example to us. 2. Our interest in him, and those his sufferings, wherein he so carried himself.

1. That his behavior was intended as an example, *Leaving us an example*, &c. He left his footsteps as a copy (as the word in the original ὑπογραμμον imports), to be followed by us; every step of his is a letter of this copy; and particularly in this point of suffering, he wrote us a pure and perfect copy of obedience, in clear and great letters, in his own blood.

His whole life is our rule: not, indeed, his miraculous works, his footsteps walking on the sea, and such like, they are not for our following: but his obedience, holiness, meekness, and humility, are our copy, which we should continually study. The shorter and more effectual way, they say, of teaching, is by example; but above all, this matchless example is the happiest way of teaching. *He that follows me*, says our Lord, *shall not walk in darkness.* John viii. 12.

He that aims high, shoots the higher for it, though he shoot not so high as he aims. This is what ennobles the spirit of a Christian, the propounding of this our high pattern, the example of Jesus Christ.

The imitation of men in worthless things, is low and servile; the imitation of their virtues is commendable, but if we aim no higher, it is both imperfect and unsafe. The Apostle St. Paul will have no imitation, but with regard to this supreme pattern: *Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ.* 1 Cor. xi. 1. One Christian may take the example of Christ as exhibited in many things, in another, but still he must examine all by the original primitive copy, the footsteps of Christ himself, following nothing, but as it is conformable to that, and looking chiefly on him, both as the most perfect and most effectual example. See Heb. xii. 2. There is *a cloud of witnesses* and examples, but look above them all, to him, who is as high above them as the sun is above the clouds. As in the covenant of grace the way is better, a living way indeed, so, there is this advantage also, that we are not left to our own skill for following it, but taught by the Spirit. In the delivery of the law, God showed his glory and greatness by the manner of giving it, but the law was written only in dead tables But Christ, the living law, teaches by obeying it, how to obey it; and this, too, is the advantage of the gospel, that the law is twice written over unto believers, first, in the example of Christ, and then inwardly in their hearts by his Spirit. There is, together, with that copy of all grace in him, a spirit derived from him, enabling believers to follow him in their measure. They may not only see him *as the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth*, as it is, John i. 14, but, as there it follows, *they receive of his fulness grace for grace.* The love of Christ makes the soul delight to converse with him·

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and converse and love together, make it learn his behavior; as men that live much together, especially if they do much affect one another, will insensibly contract one another's habits and customs.

The other thing obliging us is, 2dly. Our interest in him and his sufferings: *He suffered for us.* And to this the apostle returns, ver. 24. Observe only from the tie of these two, that if we neglect his example set before us, we can not enjoy any right assurance of his suffering for us; but if we do seriously endeavor to follow him, then we may expect to obtain life through his death, and those steps of his wherein we walk, will bring us ere long to be *where he is.*

VER. 24. Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes we are healed.

THAT which is deepest in the heart, is generally most in the mouth; that which abounds within, runs over most by the tongue or pen. When men light upon the speaking of that subject which possesses their affection, they can hardly be taken off, or drawn from it again. Thus the apostles, in their writings, when they make mention any way of Christ suffering for us, love to dwell on it, as that which they take most delight to speak of; such delicacy, such sweetness is in it to a spiritual taste, that they like to keep it in their mouth, and are never out of their theme when they insist on Jesus Christ, though they have but named him by occasion of some other doctrine: for he is the great subject of all they have to say.

Thus here, the apostle had spoken of Christ in the foregoing words very fitly to his present subject, setting him before Christian servants, and all suffering Christians, as their complete example, both in point of much suffering, and of perfect innocence and patience in suffering; and he had expressed their obligation to study and follow that example; yet, he can not leave it so, but having said that all those his sufferings wherein he was so exemplary, were for us, as a chief consideration for which we should study to be like him, he returns to that again, and enlarges upon it in words partly the same, partly very near those of that evangelist among the prophets, Isaiah liii. 4.

And it suits very well with his main scope to press this point, as giving both very much strength and sweetness to the exhortation; for surely it is most reasonable that we willingly conform to him in suffering, who had never been an example of suffering, nor subject at all to sufferings, nor in any degree capable of them, but for us; and it is most comfortable in *these light sufferings of this present moment*, to consider that he hath freed us from the sufferings of eternity, by suffering himself in our stead in the fulness of time.

That Jesus Christ is, in doing and in suffering, our supreme and matchless example, and that he came to be so, is a truth; but that he is nothing further, and came for no other end, is you see a high point of falsehood. For how should man be enabled to learn and follow that example of obedience, unless there were more than an example in Christ? and what would become of that great reckoning of disobedience that man stands guilty of? No, these are notions far too narrow. He came to *bear our sins in his own body on the tree*, and for this purpose, had a body fitted for him and given him to bear this burden, to do this as the will of his Father, to stand for us instead of all offerings and sacrifices: and *by that will*, says the apostle, *we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all.* Heb. x. 9.

This was his business not only to rectify sinful man by his example, but to redeem him by his blood. *He was a teacher come from God:* as a prophet, he teaches us the way of life, and as the best and greatest of prophets, is perfectly like his doctrine; and his actions (which in all teachers is the liveliest part of doctrine), his carriage in life and death, is our great pattern and instruction. But what is said of his forerunner, is more eminently true of Christ: he is *a prophet, and more than a prophet*—a priest satisfying justice for us, and a king conquering sin and death for us; an example, indeed, but more than an example—our *sacrifice*, and our *life*, our *all in all.* It is our duty to *walk as he walked*, to make him the pattern of our steps, 1 John ii. 6; but our comfort and salvation lie in this, that *he is the propitiation for our sins*, ver. 2. So, in the first chapter of that epistle, ver. 7, *We are to walk in the light, as he is in the light;* but for all our walking, we have need of that which follows, that bears the great weight—*The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.* And so still, that glory which he possesseth in his own person, is the pledge of ours: he is there for *us, He lives to make intercession for us*, says the apostle, Heb. vii. 25; and *I go to prepare a place for you*, says our Lord himself. John xiv. 2.

We have in the words these two great points, and in the same order as the words lie: 1. The nature and quality of the sufferings of Jesus Christ; and II. The end of them.

I. In this expression of the nature and quality of the sufferings of Christ, we are to consider, 1. The commutation of the persons, *he himself—for us.* 2. The work undertaken and performed, *he bare our sins in his own body on the tree.*

1. The act or sentence of the law against the breach of it standing in force, and divine justice expecting satisfaction, death was the necessary and inseparable consequence of sin. If you say, the supreme majesty of God

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being accountable to none, might have forgiven all without satisfaction, we are not to contest that, nor foolishly to offer to sound the bottomless depth of his absolute prerogative. Christ implies in his prayer, Matt. xxvi. 39, that it was *impossible* that he could escape *that cup;* but the impossibility is resolved into his Father's will, as the cause of it. But this we may clearly see, following the track of the holy Scriptures (our only safe way), that this way wherein our salvation is contrived, is most excellent, and suitable to the greatness and goodness of God; so full of wonders of wisdom and love, that the angels, as our apostle tells us before, can not forbear looking on it, and admiring it; for all their exact knowledge, yet they still find it infinitely beyond their knowledge, still in astonishment and admiration of what they see, and still in search, looking in to see more; those cherubim still having their eyes fixed on this mercy-seat.

Justice might indeed have seized on rebellious man, and laid the pronounced punishment on him. Mercy might have freely acquitted him, and pardoned all. But can we name any place where mercy and justice, as relating to condemned man, could have met and shined jointly in full aspect, save only in Jesus Christ?—in whom, indeed, *mercy and truth met, and righteousness and peace kissed each other*, Psal. lxxxv. 10; yea, in whose person the parties concerned, that were at so great a distance, met so near, as nearer can not be imagined.

And not only was this the sole way for the consistency of these two, justice and mercy, but take each of them severally, and they could not have been manifested in so full lustre in any other way. God's just hatred of sin did, out of doubt, appear more in punishing his own only begotten Son for it, than if the whole race of mankind had suffered for it eternally. Again, it raises the notion of mercy to the highest, that sin is not only forgiven us, but for this end God's own co-eternal Son is given to us, and for us. Consider what he is, and what we are; He the *Son of his love*, and we, enemies. Therefore, it is emphatically expressed in the words, *God so loved the world*, John iii. 16: that love amounts to this much, that is, was so great, as *to give his Son;* but how great that love is, can not be uttered. *In this*, says the apostle, Rom. v. 8, *God commendeth his love to us*, sets it off to the highest, gives us the richest and strongest evidence of it.

The foundation of this plan, this appearing of Christ for us, and undergoing and answering all in our stead, lies in the decree of God, where it was plotted and contrived, in the whole way of it, from eternity; and the Father and the Son being one, and their thoughts and will one, they were perfectly agreed on it; and those likewise for whom it should hold, were agreed upon, and their names written down, according to which they are said to be *given unto Christ to redeem*. And just according to that model did all the work proceed, and was accomplished in all points, perfectly answering to the pattern of it in the mind of God. As it was preconcluded there, that the Son should undertake the business, this matchless piece of service for his Father, and that by his interposing, men should be reconciled and saved; so that he might be altogether a fit person for the work, it was resolved, that as he was already fit for it by the almightiness of his Deity and Godhead, and the acceptableness of his person to the Father, as the Son of God, so he should be further fitted by wonderfully uniting weakness to almightiness, the frailty of man to the power of God. Because suffering for man was a main point of the work, therefore, as his being the Son of God made him acceptable to God, so his being the Son of Man made him suitable to man, in whose business he had engaged himself, and suitable to the business itself to be performed. And not only was there in him, by his human nature, a conformity to man (for that might have been accomplished by a new created body), but a consanguinity with man, by a body framed of the same piece—this Redeemer, a kinsman (as the Hebrew word *goel* is), only purified for his use, as was needful, and framed after a peculiar manner, in the womb of a virgin, as it is expressed, Heb. x. 5, *Thou hast fitted a body for me*—having no sin itself, because ordained to have so much of our sins: as it is here, *he bare our sins in his own body.*

And this looks back to the primitive transaction and purpose. *Lo! I come to do thy will*, says the Son. Psalm xl. 7. *Behold my servant whom I have chosen*, says the Father (Isa. xliii. 10), this masterpiece of my works; no one in heaven or earth is fit to serve me, but my own Son. And as he came into the world according to that decree and will, so he goes out of it again in that way. *The Son of Man goeth as is determined*, Luke xxii. 22: it was wickedly and maliciously done by men against him, but it was *determined* (which is what he there speaks of) wisely and graciously by his Father, with his own consent. As in those two-faced pictures, look upon the crucifying of Christ one way, as complotted by a treacherous disciple and malicious priests and rulers, and nothing more deformed and hateful than the authors of it; but view it again, as determined in God's counsel, for the restoring of lost mankind, and it is full of unspeakable beauty and sweetness—infinite wisdom and love in every trait of it.

Thus, also, as to the persons for whom Christ engaged to suffer, their coming unto him looks back to that first donation of the Father, as flowing from that: *All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me.* John vi. 37.

Now this being God's great design, it is

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that which he would have men eye and consider more than all the rest of his works; and yet it is least of all considered by the most! The other covenant, made with the first Adam, was but to make way, and, if we may so speak, to make work for this. For he knew that it would not hold; therefore, as this new covenant became needful by the breach of the other, so the failing of that other sets off and commends the firmness of this. The former was made with a man in his best condition, and yet he kept it not: even then, he proved vanity, as it is, Psalm xxxix. 5, *Verily, every man, in his best estate, is altogether vanity.* So that the second, that it might be stronger, is made with a man indeed, to supply the place of the former, but he is *God*-Man, to be surer than the former, and therefore it holds. And this is the difference, as the apostle expresses it, that the first Adam, in that covenant, was laid as a foundation, and, though we say not that the church, in its true notion, was built on him, yet, the estate of the whole race of mankind, the materials which the church is built of, lay on him for that time; and it failed. But upon this rock, the second Adam, is the church so firmly built, that *the gates of hell can not prevail against her. The first man, Adam, was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening* (or life-giving) *spirit.* 1 Cor. xv. 45. The first had life, but he transferred it not, yea, he kept it not for himself, but drew in and transferred death; but the second, by death, conveys life to all that are reckoned his seed: *He bare their sins.*

2. As to the work itself. He bare them *on the tree.* In that outside of his suffering, the visible kind of death inflicted on him, in that it was hanging on the tree of the cross, there was an analogy with the end and main work; and it was ordered by the Lord with regard unto that end, being a death declared *accursed by the law,* as the Apostle St. Paul observes, Gal. iii. 13, and so declaring him, who was *God blessed for ever,* to have been *made a curse* (that is, accounted as accursed) for us, that we might be blessed in him, *in whom,* according to the promise, *all the nations of the earth are blessed.*

But that wherein lay the strength and main stress of his sufferings, was this invisible weight which none could see who gazed on him, but which he felt more than all the rest: *He bare our sins.* In this there are three things. 1. The weight of sin. 2. The transferring of it upon Christ. 3. His bearing of it.

[1.] He bare sin as a heavy burden; so the word *bearing* imports in general (ἀνήνεγκεν), and those two words particularly used by the prophet, Isaiah liii. 4, to which these allude (נשׂא סבל), imply the *bearing of some great mass* or *load.* And such sin is: for it hath the wrath of an offended God hanging at it, indissolubly tied to it, of which who can bear the least? And therefore the least sin, being the procuring cause of it, will press a man down for ever, that he shall not be able to rise. *Who can stand before thee when once thou art angry?* says the psalmist, Psalm lxxvi. 7. And the prophet, Jer. iii. 12, *Return, backsliding Israel, and I will not cause my wrath to fall upon thee—to fall* as a great weight; or as a millstone, and crush the soul.

But senseless we go light under the burden of sin, and feel it not, we complain not of it, and are therefore truly said to be *dead in it;* otherwise it could not but press us, and press out complaints. *O! wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?* A profane, secure sinner thinks it nothing to break the holy law of God, to please his flesh, or the world; he counts sin a light matter, *makes a mock* of it, as Solomon says, Prov. xiv. 9. But a stirring conscience is of another mind: *Mine iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me.* Psalm xxxviii. 4.

Sin is such a burden as makes the very frame of heaven and earth, which is not guilty of it, yea, the whole creation, to crack and groan (it is the apostle's doctrine, Rom. viii. 22), and yet, the impenitent heart, whose guiltiness it is, continues unmoved, groaneth not; for your accustomed groaning is no such matter.

Yea, to consider it in connexion with the present subject, where we may best read what it is, sin was a heavy load to Jesus Christ. In Psalm xl. 12, the psalmist, speaking in the person of Christ, complains heavily, *Innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities* (not his, as done by him, but yet his, by his undertaking to pay for them) *have taken hold of me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me.* And surely that which pressed *him* so sore who upholds heaven and earth, no other in heaven or on earth could have sustained and surmounted, but would have sunk and perished under it. Was it, think you, the pain of that common outside of his death, though very painful, that drew such a word from him, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Or was it the fear of that beforehand, that pressed a *sweat of blood* from him? No it was this burden of sin, the first of which was committed in the garden of Eden, that then began to be laid upon him and fastened upon his shoulders in the garden of Gethsemane, ten thousand times heavier than the cross which he was caused to bear. That might be for a while turned over to another but this could not. This was the cup he trembled at more than at that gall and vinegar to be afterward offered to him by his crucifiers, or any part of his external sufferings: it was the bitter cup of wrath due to sin, which his Father put into his hand, and caused him to drink, the very same thing that is here called the *bearing our sins in his body.*

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And consider, that the very smallest sins contributed to make up this load, and made it so much the heavier: and therefore, though sins be comparatively smaller and greater, yet learn thence to account no sin in itself small which offends the great God, and which lay heavy upon your great Redeemer in the day of his sufferings.

At his apprehension, besides the soldiers, that invisible crowd of the sins he was to suffer for, came about him, for it was these that laid strongest hold on him: he could easily have shaken off all the rest, as appears, Matt. xxvi. 33, but our sins laid the arrest on him, being accounted his, as it is in that forecited place, Psalm xl. 12, *Mine iniquities.* Now among these were even those sins we call small; they were of the number that took him, and they were among those instruments of his bloodshed. If the greater part were as the spear that pierced his side, the less were as the nails that pierced his hands and his feet, and the very least as the thorns that were set on his precious head. And the multitude of them made up what was wanting in their magnitude; though they were small, they were many.

[2.] They were transferred upon him by virtue of that covenant we spoke of. They became his debt, and he responsible for all they came to. Seeing you have accepted of this business according to my will (may we conceive the Father saying to his Son), you must go through with it; you are engaged in it, but it is no other than what you understood perfectly before; you knew what it would cost you, and yet, out of joint love with me to those I named to be saved by you, you were as willing as I to the whole undertaking. Now therefore the time is come that I must lay upon you the sins of all those persons, and you must bear them; the sins of all those believers who lived before, and all who are to come after, to the end of the world. *The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all,* says the prophet (Isa. liii. 6), took it off from us and charged it on him, made it *to meet on him,* or *to fall in together,* as the word in the original imports. The sins of all, in all ages before and after, who were to be saved, all their guiltiness met together on his back upon the cross. Whosoever of all that number had least sin, yet had no small burden to cast on him: and to give accession to the whole weight, *every man hath had his own way of wandering,* as the prophet there expresseth it, and he paid for all; all fell on him. And as in testimony of his meekness and patience, so, in this respect likewise, was he so silent in his sufferings, that though his enemies dealt most unjustly with him, yet he stood as convicted before the justice-seat of his Father, under the imputed guilt of all our sins, and so eying him, and accounting his business to be chiefly with him, he did patiently bear the due punishment of all our sins at his Father's hand, according to that of the psalmist, *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because thou didst it.* Psalm xxxix. 9. Therefore the prophet immediately subjoins the description of his silent carriage, to that which he had spoken of, the confluence of our iniquities upon him: *As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.* Isa. liii. 7.

And if our sins were thus accounted his, then, in the same way, and for that very reason, his sufferings and satisfaction must of necessity be accounted ours. As he said for his disciples, to the men who came to take him, *If it be me ye seek, then let these go free;* so he said for all believers, to his Father, his wrath then seizing on him, If on me thou wilt lay hold, then let these go free. And thus the agreement was: *He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* 2 Cor. v. *ult.*

So, then, there is a union between believers and Jesus Christ, by which this interchange was made; he being charged with their sins, and they clothed with his satisfaction and righteousness. This union is founded, 1*st*, in God's decree of election, running to this effect, that they should live in Christ, and so, choosing the head and the whole mystical body as one, and reckoning their debt as his, in his own purpose, that he might receive satisfaction, and they salvation, in their head, Christ. The execution of that purpose and union began in Christ's incarnation, it being for them, though the nature he assumed is theirs in common with other men. It is said, Heb. ii. 16, *He took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham,* the company of believers: he became man for their sakes, because they are men. That he is of the same nature with unbelieving men who perish, is but by accident, as it were; there is no good to them in that, but the great evil of deeper condemnation, if they hear of him, and believe not; but he was made man to be like, yea, to be one with the elect, *and he is not ashamed to call them brethren,* as the apostle there says, Hebrews ii. 11. 2*dly*, This union is also founded in the actual intention of the Son so made man; he presenting himself to the Father in all he did and suffered, *as for them,* having them, and them only, in his eye and thoughts, in all. *For their sakes do I sanctify myself,* John xvii. 1, 9. Again, 3*dly*, This union is applied and performed in them, when they are converted and ingrafted into Jesus Christ by faith; and this doth actually discharge them of their own sins, and entitle them to his righteousness, and so justify them in the sight of God. 4*thly*, The consummation of this union, is in glory, which is the result and fruit of all the former. As it began in heaven, it is completed there; but between these two in heaven, the intervention of those other two degrees of it on earth was necessary, being intended in the first, as tending to the attainment of the last. These four steps of it are

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all distinctly expressed in our Lord's own prayer, John xvii. 1*st*, God's purpose that the Son should give *eternal life to those whom he hath given him*, ver. 2. 2*dly*, The Son's undertaking and accomplishing their redemption, in verse 4: *I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.* 3*dly*, The application of this union, and its performance in them, by their *faith*, their *believing*, and *keeping his word*, ver. 6, 8, and in several of the subsequent verses. And then, lastly, the consummation of this union, ver. 24: *I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.* There meet the first donation, and the last.

Now to obtain this life for them, Christ died *in their stead*. He appeared as the High-Priest, being perfectly and truly what the name was on their plate of gold, *holiness to the Lord*, Exod. xxviii. 36, and so *bearing their iniquity*, as it is there added of Aaron, ver. 38. But because the High-Priest was not the Redeemer, but only prefigured him, he did not himself suffer for the people's sin, but turned it over upon the beasts which he sacrificed, signifying that translation of sin, by laying his hand upon the head of the beast. But Jesus Christ is both the great high-priest and the great sacrifice in one; and this seems to be here implied in these words, *himself bare our sins in his own body*, which the Priest under the law did not. So, Isa. liii. 10, and Heb. ix. 12, *He made his soul an offering for sin.* He offered up himself, his *whole self*. In the history of the gospel, it is said, that *his soul was heavy*, and chiefly suffered; but it is the bearing sin in *his body*, and offering it, that is oftenest mentioned as the visible part of the sacrifice, and as his way of offering it, not excluding the other. Thus (Rom. xii. 1) we are exhorted to give *our bodies*, in opposition to the bodies of beasts, and they are therefore called *a living sacrifice*, which they are not without the soul. So, Christ's bearing it *in his body*, imports the bearing of it in his soul too.

[3.] His *bearing* of our sins, hints that he was active and willing in his suffering for us; it was not a constrained offering. *He laid down his life*, as he himself tells us, John x. 18; and this expression here, *He bare*, implies, He took willingly off, lifted from us that burden, to bear it himself. It was counted an ill sign among the heathens, when the beasts went unwillingly to be sacrificed, and drew back, and a good omen when they went willingly. But never was sacrifice so willing as our great sacrifice; and we may be assured he hath appeased his Father's wrath, and wrought atonement for us. Isaac was in this a type of Christ; we hear of no reluctance; he submitted quietly to be bound when he was to be offered up. There are two words used in Isaiah, chap. liii. 4, the one signifying *bearing*, the other, *taking away*. This *bearing* includes, also, that *taking away of the sins of the world*, spoken of by St. John, chap. i. 29, which answers to both; and so he, the great antitype, answers to both the goats, the sin-offering and the scape-goat, Levit. xvi. He did bear our sins on his cross, and thence did bear them away to his grave, and there they are buried; and they whose sins he did so bear, and take away, and bury, shall hear no more of them as theirs to bear. Is he not, then, worthy to be beheld, in that notion under which John, in the forementioned text, viewed him, and designates him?—*Behold the Lamb of God, which beareth and taketh away the sins of the world!*

You, then, who are gazing on vanity, be persuaded to turn your eyes this way, and behold this lasting wonder, this Lord of life dying! But the most, alas! want a due eye for this object. It is the eye of faith alone, that looks aright on him, and is daily discovering new worlds of excellency and delight in this crucified Savior; that can view him daily, as hanging on the cross, without the childish, gaudy help of a crucifix, and grow in the knowledge of that love which passeth knowledge, and rejoice itself in frequent thinking and speaking of him, instead of those idle and vain thoughts at the best, and empty discourses, wherein the most delight, and wear out the day. What is all knowledge but painted folly in comparison of this? Hadst thou Solomon's faculty to discourse of all plants, and hadst not the right knowledge of this *root of Jesse;* wert thou singular in the knowledge of the stars and of the course of the heavens, and couldst walk through the spheres with a *Jacob's staff*, but ignorant of this *star of Jacob;* if thou knewest the histories of all time, and the life and death of all the most famous princes, and could rehearse them all, but dost not spiritually know and apply to thyself the death of Jesus as thy life; thou art still a wretched fool, and all thy knowledge with thee shall quickly perish. On the other side, if thy capacity or breeding hath denied thee the knowledge of all these things wherein men glory so much, yet, do but learn *Christ crucified*, and what wouldst thou have more? That shall make thee happy for ever. *For this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* John xvii. 3.

Here St. Paul takes up his rest, *I determined to know nothing, but Jesus Christ and him crucified.* 1 Cor. ii. 2. As if he had said, Whatsoever I knew besides, I resolved to be as if I knew nothing besides this, the only knowledge wherein I will rejoice myself, and which I will labor to impart to others. I have tried and compared the rest, and find them all unworthy of their room beside this, and my whole soul too little for this. I have passed this judgment and sentence on all. I have adjudged myself to deny all other knowledge, and confined myself within this circle, and I am not straitened. No, there is room enough in it; it is larger than heaven and earth, *Christ, and him crucified;* the most

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despised and ignominious part of knowledge, yet the sweetest and most comfortable part of all: the root whence all our hopes of life, and all our spiritual joys do spring.

But the greatest part of mankind hear this subject as a story. Some are a little moved with the present sound of it, but they draw not home into their hearts, to make it theirs, and to find salvation in it, but still cleave to sin, and love sin better than him who suffered for it.

But you whose hearts the Lord hath deeply humbled under a sense of sin, come to this depth of consolation, and try it, that you may have experience of the sweetness and riches of it. Study this point thoroughly, and you will find it answer all, and quiet your consciences. Apply this *bearing of sin* by the Lord Jesus for you, for it is published and made known to you for this purpose. This is the genuine and true use of it, as of the *brazen serpent*, not that the people might emptily gaze on the fabric of it, but that those that looked on it might be cured. When all that can be said, is said against you, "It is true," may you say, "but it is all satisfied for; he on whom I rest, made it his, and did bear it for me." The person of Christ is of more worth than all men, yea, than all the creatures, and therefore, his life was a full ransom for the greatest offender.

And as for outward troubles and sufferings, which were the occasion of this doctrine in this place, they are all made exceeding light by the removal of this great pressure. Let the Lord lay on me what he will, seeing he hath taken off my sin, and laid that on his own Son in my stead. I may suffer many things, but he hath borne that for me, which alone was able to make me miserable.

And you that have this persuasion, how will your hearts be taken up with his love, *who has so loved you as to give himself for you*; who interposed himself to bear off from you the stroke of everlasting death, and encountered all the wrath due to us, and went through with that great work, by reason of *his* unspeakable love! Let him never go forth from my heart, who for my sake refused to go down from the cross.

II. The end of these sufferings. *That we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness.*] The Lord doth nothing in vain; he hath not made the least of his works to no purpose; *in wisdom hath he made them all*, says the psalmist. And this is true, not only in regard of their excellent frame and order, but of their end, which is a chief point of wisdom. So then, in order to a right knowledge of this great work put into the hands of Jesus Christ, it is of special concern to understand what is its end.

Now this is the thing which Divine wisdom and love aimed at in that great undertaking, and therefore it will be our truest wisdom, and the truest evidence of our reflex love, to intend the same thing, that in this, *the same mind may be in us, that was in Christ Jesus* in his suffering for us; for this very end it is expressed, *That we being dead to sin, should live to righteousness.*

In this there are three things to be considered: 1*st*, What this death and life is; 2dly, The designing of it in the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ; 3dly, The effecting of it by them.

1*st*. What this death and life is. Whatsoever it is, surely it is no small change that bears the name of the great and last natural change that we are subject to, a *death*, and then another kind of life succeeding to it.

In this the greatest part of mankind are mistaken, that they take any slight alteration in themselves for true conversion. A world of people are deluded with superficial moral changes in their life, some rectifying of their outward actions and course of life, and somewhat too in the temper and habit of their mind. Far from reaching the bottom of nature's wickedness, and *laying the axe to the root of the tree*, it is such a work as man can make a shift with by themselves. But the renovation which the Spirit of God worketh, is like himself: it is so deep and total a work, that it is justly called by the name of the most substantial works and productions: *a new birth*, and more than that, *a new creation*, and here, a *death* and a kind of *life* following it.

This *death to sin*, supposes a former *living in it*, and to it; and while a man does so he is said indeed to be *dead in sin*, and yet withal, this is true, that he lives in sin, as the apostle, speaking of widows, joins the expressions, 1 Tim. v. 6, *She that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth.* So Eph. ii. 1, *Dead in trespasses and sins*, and he adds, *wherein ye walked*, which imports a life, such a one as it is; and more expressly, ver. 3, *We had our conversation in the lusts of the flesh.* Now, thus to live in sin, is termed being dead in it, because in that condition, man is indeed dead in respect of that Divine life of the soul, that happy being which it should have in union with God, for which it was made, and without which it had better not be at all. For that life, as it is different from its natural being, and a kind of life above it, so it is contrary to that corrupt being and life it hath in sin: and therefore, to live in sin, is to be dead in it, being a deprivement of that Divine being, that life of the soul in God, in comparison whereof not only the base life it hath in sin, but the very natural life it hath in the body, and which the body hath by it, is not worthy of the name of life. You see the body, when the thread of its union with the soul is cut, become not only straightway a motionless lump, but within a little time, a putrefied, noisome carcass; and thus the soul by sin cut off from God who is its life, as is the soul that of the body, hath not only no moving faculty in good, but becomes full of rottenness and vile-



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ness: as the word is, Psalm xiv. 2, *They are gone aside and become filthy.* The soul, by turning away from God, turns filthy; yet, as a man thus spiritually dead, lives naturally, so, because he acts and spends that natural life in the ways of sin, he is said to *live in sin.* Yea, there is somewhat more in that expression than the mere passing of his life in that way; for instead of that happy life his soul should have in God, he pleases himself in the miserable life of sin, that which is his death, as if it were the proper life of his soul: *living in it* imports that natural propension he hath to sin, and the continual delight he takes in it, as in his element, and living to it, as if that were the very end of his being. In that estate, neither his body nor his mind stirreth without sin. Setting aside his manifest breaches of the law, those actions that are evidently and totally sinful, his natural actions, his eating and drinking, his religious actions, his praying, and hearing, and preaching, are sin at the bottom. And generally, his heart is no other than a forge of sin. *Every imagination,* every fiction of things framed there, *is only evil continually;* Gen. vi. 5: every day, and all the day long, it is his very trade and life.

Now, in opposition to this life of sin, this living in it and to it, a Christian is said to *die to sin,* to be cut off or separated from it. In our miserable natural state, there is as close a union between us and sin, as between our souls and bodies: it lives in us, and we in it, and the longer we live in that condition, the more the union grows, and the harder it is to dissolve it; and it is as old as the union of soul and body, begun with it, so that nothing but the death here spoken of can part them. And this death, in this relative sense, is mutual: in the work of conversion, sin dies, and the soul dies to sin, and these two are really one and the same thing. The spirit of God kills both at one blow, sin in the soul, and the soul to sin: as the apostle says of himself and the world, Gal. vi. 14, each is crucified to the other.

And there are in it chiefly these two things, which make the difference, [1,] the solidity, and [2,] the universality of this change here represented under the notion of death.

Many things may lie in a man's way between him and the acting of divers sins which possibly he affects most. Some restraints, either outward or inward, may be upon him, the authority of others, the fear of shame or punishment, or the check of an enlightened conscience; and though by reason of these, he commit not the sin he would, yet he *lives in it,* because he *loves* it, because he would commit it: as we say, the soul lives not so much where it animates, as where it loves. And generally, that metaphorical kind of life, by which man is said to live in anything, hath its principal seat in the affection: that is the immediate link of the union in such a life; and the untying and death consists chiefly in the disengagement of the heart, the breaking off the affection from it. *Ye that love the Lord,* says the psalmist, *hate evil,* Psalm xcvii. 10. An unrenewed mind may have some temporary dislikes even of its beloved sins in cold blood, but it returns to like them within a while. A man may not only have times of cessation from his wonted way of sinning, but, by reason of the society wherein he is, and the withdrawing of occasion to sin, and divers other causes, his very desire after it may seem to himself to be abated, and yet he may be not dead to sin, but only asleep to it; and therefore, when a temptation, backed with opportunity and other inducing circumstances, comes and jogs him, he awakes, and arises, and follows it.

A man may for a while distaste some meat which he loves (possibly upon a surfeit), but he quickly regains his liking of it. Every quarrel with sin, every fit of dislike to it, is not that hatred, which is implied in dying to sin. Upon the lively representation of the deformity of his sin to his mind, certainly a natural man may fall out with it; but this is but as the little jars of husband and wife, which are far from dissolving the marriage: it is not a fixed hatred, such as among the Jews inferred a divorce—*If thou hate her, put her away;* that is to die to it; as by a legal divorce the husband and wife are civilly dead one to another in regard to the tie and use of marriage.

Again; some men's education, and custom, and moral principles, may free them from the grossest kind of sins, yea, a man's temper may be averse from them, but they are alive to their own kind of sins, such as possibly are not so deformed in the common account, covetousness, or pride, or hardness of heart, and either a hatred or a disdain of the ways of holiness which are too strict for them, and exceed their size. Besides, for the good of human society, and for the interest of his own church and people, God restrains many natural men from the height of wickedness, and gives them moral virtues. There be very many, and very common sins, which more refined natures, it may be, are scarcely tempted to; but as in their diet, and apparel, and other things in their natural life, they have the same kind of being with other persons, though they are more neat and elegant, so, in this living to sin, they live the same life with other ungodly men, though with a little more delicacy.

They consider not that the devils are not in themselves subject to, nor capable of, many of those sins that are accounted grossest among men, and yet are greater rebels and enemies to God than men are.

But to be *dead to sin* goes deeper, and extends further than all this; it involves a most inward alienation of heart from sin, and most universal from all sin, an antipathy to the most beloved sin. Not only doth the believer forbear sin, but he hates it—*I hate vain thoughts,*

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Psalm cxix. 113; and not only doth he hate some sins, but all—*I hate every false way*, ver. 128. A stroke at the heart does it, which is the certainest and quickest death of any wound. For in this dying to sin, the whole man of necessity dies to it; the mind dies to the device and study of sin, that vein of invention becomes dead; the hand dies to the acting of it; the ear, to the delightful hearing of things profane and sinful; the tongue, to the world's dialect of oaths, and rotten speaking, and calumny, and evil-speaking, which is the commonest effect of the tongue's life in sin—the very natural heat of sin exerts and vents itself most that way; the eye becomes dead to that intemperate look that Solomon speaks of, when he cautions us against *eying the wine when it is red and well-colored in the cup*, Prov. xxiii. 31: it is not taken with looking on the glittering skin of that *serpent* till it *bite* and *sting*, as there he adds. It becomes also dead to that unchaste look which kindles fire in the heart, to which Job blindfolded and deadened his eyes, by an express compact and agreement with them: *I have made a covenant with mine eyes.* Job xxxi. 1.

The eye of a godly man is not fixed on the false sparkling of the world's pomp, honor, and wealth; it is dead to them, being quite dazzled with a greater beauty. The grass looks fine in the morning, when it is set with those liquid pearls, the drops of dew that shine upon it; but if you can look but a little while on the body of the sun, and then look down again, the eye is as it were dead; it sees not that faint shining on the earth that it thought so gay before: and as the eye is blinded, and dies to it, so, within a few hours, that gayety quite evanishes and dies itself.

Men think it strange that the godly are not fond of their diet, that their appetite is not surred with desire of their delights and dainties; they know not that such as be Christians indeed, are dead to those things, and the best dishes that are set before a dead man, give him not a stomach. The godly man's *throat is cut to those meats*, as Solomon advises in another subject, Prov. xxiii. 2. But why may not you be a little more sociable to follow the fashion of the world, and take a share with your neighbors, may some say, without so precisely and narrowly examining everything? It is true, says the Christian, that the time was when I advised as little with conscience as others, but sought myself, and pleaded myself, as they do, and looked no further, but that was when *I was alive to those ways;* but now, truly, *I am dead to them:* and can you look for activity and conversation from a dead man? The pleasures of sin wherein I lived, are still the same, but I am not the same. Are you such a sneak and a fool, says the natural man, as to bear affronts, and swallow them, and say nothing? Can you suffer to be so abused by such and such a wrong? Indeed, says the Christian again, I could once have resented an injury, as you or another would, and had somewhat of what you call high-heartedness, when I was alive after your fashion; but now, that humor is not only something cooled, bnt it is killed in me; it is cold dead, as ye say; and a greater spirit, I think, than my own, hath taught me another lesson, hath made me both deaf and dumb that way, and hath given me a new vent, and another language, and another party to speak to on such occasions. *They that seek my hurt*, says David, *speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long.* What doth he in this case? *But I, as a deaf man, heard not, and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth.* And why? *For in thee, O Lord, do I hope.* Psalm xxxviii. 12–15. And for this deadness that you despise, I have seen him who died for me, *who, when he was reviled, reviled not again.*

This is the true character of a Christian; he is *dead to sin.* But, alas! where is this Christian to be found? And yet, thus is every one who truly partakes of Christ; he is dead to sin really. Hypocrites have an historical kind of death like this, as players in tragedies. Those players have loose bags of blood that receive the wound: so the hypocrite in some externals, and it may be, in that which is as near him as any outward thing, his purse, may suffer some bloodshed of that for Christ. But this death to sin is not a swooning fit, that one may recover out of again: the apostle, Rom. vi. 4, adds, that the believer *is buried with Christ.*

But this is an unpleasant subject, to talk thus of death and burial. The very name of death, in the softest sense it can have, makes a sour, melancholy discourse. It is so indeed, if you take it alone, if there were not, for the life that is lost, a far better one immediately following; but so it is here; *living unto righteousness* succeeds *dying to sin.*

That which makes natural death so affrightful, the *King of terrors*, as Job calls it, ch. xvii. 14, is mainly this faint belief and assurance of the resurrection and glory to come; and without some lively apprehension of this, all men's moral resolutions and discourses are too weak cordials against this fear. They may set a good face on it, and speak big, and so cover the fear they can not cure; but certainly, they are a little ridiculous who would persuade men to content to die, by reasoning from the necessity and unavoidableness of it, which, taken alone, rather may beget a desperate discontent than a quiet compliance. The very weakness of that argument is, that it is too strong, *durum telum.* That of company is fantastic; it may please the imagination, but satisfies not the judgment. Nor are the miseries of life, though an argument somewhat more proper, a full persuasive to meet death without reluctance: the oldest, the most decrepit, and most diseased persons, yet naturally fall not out with life, but could have a mind to it

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still; and the very truth is this, the worst cottage any one dwells in, he is loath to go out of till he knows of a better. And the reason why that which is so hideous to others, was so sweet to martyrs (Heb. xi. 35), and other godly men who have heartily embraced death, and welcomed it though in very terrible shapes, was, because they had firm assurance of immortality beyond it. The ugly death's head, when the light of glory shines through the holes of it, is comely and lovely. To look upon death as eternity's birth-day, is that which makes it not only tolerable, but amiable. *Hic dies postremus, æterni natalis est*, is the word I admire more than any other that ever dropped from a heathen.

Thus here, the strongest inducement to this death, is the true notion and contemplation of this life unto which it transfers us. It is most necessary to represent this, for a natural man hath as great an aversion every whit from this figurative death, this *dying to sin*, as from natural death; and there is the more necessity of persuading him to this, because his consent ts necessary to it. No man dies this death to sin, unwillingly, although no man is naturally willing to it. Much of this death consists in a man's consenting thus to die; and this is not only a lawful, but a laudable, yea, a necessary self-murder. *Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth*, says the apostle, Col. iii. 5. Now no sinner would be content to *die to sin*, if that were all; but if it be passing to a more excellent *life*, then he gaineth, and it were a folly not to seek this death. It was a strange power of Plato's discourse of the soul's immortality, that moved a young man, upon reading it, to throw himself into the sea, that he might leap through it to that immortality: but truly, were this life of God, this *life to righteousness*, and the excellency and delight of it known, it would gain many minds to this death whereby we step into it.

But there is a necessity of a new being as the principle of new action and motion. The apostle says, *While ye served sin, ye were free from righteousness*, Rom. vi. 20; so it is, while ye were alive to sin, ye were dead to righteousness. But there is a new breath of life from heaven, breathed on the soul. Then lives the soul indeed, when it is one with God, and sees *light in his light*, Psalm xxxii. 9—hath a spiritual knowledge of him, and therefore sovereignly loves him, and delights in his will. And this is indeed, *to live unto righteousness*, which, in a comprehensive sense, takes in all the frame of a Christian life, and all the duties of it toward God and toward men.

By this new nature, the very natural motion of the soul so taken, is obedience to God; and walking in the paths of righteousness, it can no more live in the habit and ways of sin, than a man can live under water. Sin is not the Christian's element; it is as much too gross for his renewed soul, as the water is for his body; he may fall into it, but he can not breathe in it; can not take delight, and continue to live in it. *But his delight is in the law of the Lord*, Psalm i. 2. That is the walk which his soul refreshes itself in he loves it entirely, and loves it most, where it most crosses the remainders of corruption that are within him. He bends the strength of his soul to please God; aims wholly at that; it takes up his thoughts early and late. He hath no other purpose in his being and living, than only to honor his Lord. This is, *to live to righteousness*. He doth not make a by-work of it, a study for his spare hours: no, it is his main business, his all. *In his law doth he meditate day and night*. This life, like the natural one, is seated in the heart, and thence diffuses itself to the whole man; he *loves* righteousness, and *receiveth the truth* (as the apostle speaks) *in the love of it*. A natural man may do many things which, as to their shell and outside, are righteous; but he lives not to righteousness, because his heart is not possessed and ruled by the love of it. But this life makes the godly man delight to walk uprightly and to speak of righteousness; his language and ways carry the resemblance of his heart. I know it is easiest to act that part of religion which is in the tongue, but the Christian, nevertheless, ought not to be spiritually dumb. Because some birds are taught to speak, men do not for that give it over, and leave off to speak. *The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment*. And his feet strive to keep pace with his tongue, which gives evidence of its unfeignedness; *none of his steps shall slide*, or, he shall not stagger in his steps. But that which is betwixt these, is the common spring of both; *the law of God is in his heart*. See Psalm xxxvii. 30, 31; and thence, as Solomon says, *are the issues of his life*, Prov. iv. 3. That law in his heart, is the principle of *this living to righteousness*.

2. The second thing here, is, that it was the design of the sufferings and death of Christ, to produce in us this death and life: *He bare sin*, and died for it, that we might die to it.

Out of some conviction of the consequence of sin, many have a confused desire to be justified, to have sin pardoned, who look no farther: they think not on the importance and necessity of sanctification, the nature whereof is expressed by this *dying to sin*, and *living to righteousness*.

But here we see that sanctification is necessary as inseparably connected with justification, not only as its companion, but as its end, which, in some sort, raises it above the other. We see that it was the thing which God eyed and intended, in taking away the guiltiness of sin, that we might be renewed and sanctified. If we compare them in point of time, looking backward, holiness was always neces-

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sary unto happiness, but satisfying for sin, and the pardon of it, were made necessary by sin: or, if we look forward, the estate we are appointed to, and for which we are delivered from wrath, is an estate of perfect holiness. When we reflect upon that great work of redemption, we see it aimed at there, *redeemed to be holy*, Eph. v. 25, 26; Tit. ii. 14. And if we go yet higher, to the very spring, the decree of election, with regard to that it is said, Eph. i. 14, *Chosen before, that we should be holy*. And the end shall suit the design: *Nothing shall enter into the new Jerusalem that is defiled*, or unholy; nothing but perfect purity is there; not a spot of sinful pollution, not a *wrinkle* of the old man. For this end was that great work undertaken by the Son of God, that he might frame out of polluted mankind a new and holy generation to his Father, who might compass his throne in the life of glory, and give him pure praises, and behold his face in that eternity. Now, for this end it was needful, according to the all-wise purpose of the Father, that the guiltiness of sin and sentence of death should be once removed: and thus, the burden of that lay upon Christ's shoulders on the cross. That done, it is further necessary, that souls so delivered be likewise purified and renewed, for they are designed for perfection of holiness in the end, and it must begin here.

Yet it is not possible to persuade men of this, that Christ had this in this eye and purpose when he was lifted up upon the cross, and looked upon the whole company of those his Father had given him to save, that he would redeem them to be a number of holy persons. We would be redeemed; who is there that would not? But Christ would have his redeemed ones holy; and they who are not true to this his end, but cross and oppose him in it, may hear of redemption long and often, but little to their comfort. Are you resolved still to abuse and delude yourselves? Well, whether you will believe it or not, this is once more told you: there is unspeakable comfort in the death of Christ, but it belongs only to those who *are dead to sin, and alive to righteousness*. This circle shuts out the impenitent world; there it closes, and can not be broken through; but all who are penitent, are by their effectual calling lifted into it, translated from that accursed condition wherein they were. So then, if you will live in your sins, you may; but then, resolve withal to bear them yourselves, for Christ, in his bearing of sin, meant the benefit of none, but such as in due time are thus dead, and thus alive with him.

3. But then, in the third place, Christ's sufferings and death effect all this. [1.] As the exemplary cause, the lively contemplation of Christ crucified, in the most powerful of all thoughts, to separate the heart and sin. But [2,] besides this example, working as a moral cause, Christ is the effective natural cause of this death and life; for he is one with the believer, and there is a real influence of his death and life into their souls. This mysterious union of Christ and the believer, is that whereon both their justification and sanctification, the whole frame of their salvation and happiness, depends. And in this particular view the apostle still insists on it, speaking of Christ and believers as one in his death and resurrection, *crucified with him, dead with him, buried with him, and risen with him*. Rom. vi. 4, &c. Being arisen he applies his death to those he died for, and by it kills the life of sin in them, and so is avenged on it for its being the cause of his death: according to that expression of the Psalmist, *Raise me up, that I may requite them*. Psalm. xli. 10. Christ infuses, and then actuates and stirs up that faith and love in them, by which they are united to him; and these work powerfully in producing this.

[3.] Faith looks so steadfastly on its suffering Savior, that as they say, *Intellectus fit illud quod intelligit*, the mind becomes that which it contemplates. It makes the soul like him, assimilates and *conforms it to his death*, as the apostle speaks, Phil. iii. 10. That which papists fabulously say of some of their saints, that they received the impression of the wounds of Christ in their body, is true, in a spiritual sense, of the soul of every one that is indeed a saint and a believer: it takes the very print of his death, by beholding him, and *dies to sin;* and then takes that of his rising again, and *lives to righteousness*. As it applies it to *justify*, so to *mortify*, drawing virtue from it. Thus said one, "Christ aimed at this in all those sufferings which, with so much love, he went through; and shall I disappoint him, and not serve his end?"

[4.] That other powerful grace of love joins in this work with faith; for love desires nothing more than likeness and conformity: though it be a painful resemblance, so much the better and fitter to testify love. Therefore it will have the soul die with him who died for it, and the very same kind of death: *I am crucified with Christ*, says the great apostle, Gal. ii. 20. The love of Christ in the soul takes the very nails that fastened him to the cross, and crucifies the soul to the world, and sin. *Love is strong as death*, particularly in this. The strongest and liveliest body, when death seizes it, must yield, and that become motionless, which was so vigorous before: thus the soul that is most active and unwearied in sin, when this love seizes it, is killed to sin; and as death separates a man from his dearest friends and society, this love breaks all its ties and friendship with sin. Generally, as Plato hath it, love takes away one's living in one's self, and transfers it into the party loved; but the divine love of Christ doth it in the truest and highest manner.

*By whose stripes ye were healed.*] The misery of fallen man, and the mercy of his deliverance, are both of them such a depth,

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that no one expression, yea, no variety of expressions added one to another, can fathom them. Here we have divers very significant ones. 1. The guiltiness of sin as an intolerable burden, pressing the soul and sinking it, and that transferred and laid on a stronger back: *He bare.* Then, 2. The same wretchedness, under the notion of a strange disease, by all other means incurable, *healed by his stripes.* And, 3. It is again represented by the forlorn condition of a sheep wandering, and our salvation to be found only in the love and wisdom of our great Shepherd. And all these are borrowed from that sweet and clear prophecy in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah.

The polluted nature of man is no other than a bundle of desperate diseases: he is spiritually dead, as the Scriptures often teach. Now this contradicts not, nor at all lessens the matter; but only because this misery, justly called *death*, exists in a subject animated with a natural life, therefore, so considered, it may bear the name and sense of sickness, or wounds: and therefore it is gross misprision—they are as much out in their argument as in their conclusion, who would extract, out of these expressions, any evidence that there are remains of spiritual life, or good, in our corrupted nature. But they are not worthy the contest, though vain heads think to argue themselves into life, and are seeking that life, by logic, in miserable nature, which they should seek, by faith, in Jesus Christ, namely, in these *his stripes*, by which *we are healed.*

It were a large task to name our spiritual maladies; how much more, severally to unfold their natures! Such a multitude of corrupt false principles in the mind, which, as gangrenes, do spread themselves through the soul, and defile the whole man; that total gross blindness and unbelief in spiritual things, and that stone of the heart, hardness and impenitency: lethargies of senselessness and security; and then (for there be such complications of spiritual diseases in us, as in naturals are altogether impossible) such burning fevers of inordinate affections and desires, of lust, and malice, and envy, such racking and tormenting cares of covetousness, and *feeding on earth and ashes* (as the prophet speaks in another case, Isa. xliv. 20), according to the depraved appetite that accompanies some diseases; such tumors of pride and self-conceit, that break forth, as filthy botches, in men's words and carriage one with another! In a word, what a wonderful disorder must needs be in the natural soul, by the frequent interchanges and fight of contrary passions within it! And, besides all these, how many deadly wounds do we receive from without, by the temptations of Satan and the world! We entertain them, and by weapons with which they furnish us, we willingly wound ourselves; as the apostle says of them *who will be rich*, they *fall into divers snares and noisome lusts, and pierce themselves through with many sorrows.* 1 Timothy vi. 9, 10.

Did we see it, no infirmary or hospital was ever so full of loathsome and miserable spectacles, as, in a spiritual sense, our wretched nature is in any one of us apart: how much more when multitudes of us are met together! But our evils are hid from us, and we perish miserably in a dream of happiness! This makes up and completes our wretchedness, that we feel it not with our other diseases, and this makes it worse still. This was the church's disease, Rev. iii. 17: *Thou sayest, I am rich, and knowest not that thou art poor,* &c. We are usually full of complaints of trifling griefs which are of small moment, and think not on, nor feel our dangerous maladies: as he who showed a physician his sore finger, but the physician told him, he had more need to think on the cure of a dangerous imposthume within him, which he perceived by looking at him, though himself did not feel it.

In dangerous maladies or wounds, there be these evils: a tendency to death, and, with that, the apprehension of the terror and fear of it, and the present distemper of the body. So, there are in sin, 1. The guiltiness of sin binding over the soul to death, the most frightful, eternal death; 2. The terror of conscience in the apprehension of that death, or the wrath that is the consequence and end of sin; 3. The raging and prevailing power of sin, which is the ill habitude and distemper of the soul. But these *stripes*, and that blood which issued from them, are a sound cure. Applied unto the soul, they take away the guiltiness of sin, and death deserved, and free us from our engagement to those everlasting scourgings and lashes of the wrath of God; and they are likewise the only cure of those present terrors and pangs of conscience, arising from the sense of that wrath and sentence of death upon the soul. Our iniquities which met on Him, laid open to the rod that back which in itself was free. Those hands which never wrought iniquity, and those feet which never declined from the way of righteousness, yet, for our works and wanderings, were pierced; and that tongue dropped with vinegar and gall on the cross, which never spoke a guileful nor sinful word. The blood of those stripes is that balm issuing from that Tree of Life so pierced, which can alone give ease to the conscience, and heal the wounds of it: they deliver from the power of sin, working by their influence a loathing of sin, which was the cause of them; they cleanse out the vicious humors of our corrupt nature, by opening that issue of repentance: *They shall look on him, and mourn over him whom they have pierced*, Zech. xii. 10.

Now, to the end it may thus cure, it must be applied: it is the only receipt, but, in order to heal, it must be received. The most sovereign medicines cure not in any other manner, and therefore, still their first letter is R *Recipe*, take such a thing.

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This is among the wonders of that great work, that the sovereign Lord of all, who binds and looses at his pleasure the influences of heaven, and the power and workings of all the creatures, would himself in our flesh be thus bound, the only Son bound as a slave, and scourged as a malefactor! And his willing obedience made this an acceptable and expiating sacrifice, among the rest of his sufferings: *He gave his back to the smiters*, Isa. l. 6.

Now, it can not be that any one who is thus healed, reflecting upon this cure, can again take any constant delight in sin. It is impossible so far to forget both the grief it bred themselves, and that which it cost their Lord, as to make a new agreement with it, to live in the pleasure of it.

*His stripes.*] Turn your thoughts, every one of you, to consider this: you that are not healed, that you may be healed; and you that are, apply it still to perfect the cure in that part wherein it is gradual and not complete; and for the ease you have found, bless and love Him who endured so much uneasiness to that end. There is a sweet mixture of sorrow and joy in contemplating these stripes; sorrow, surely, by sympathy, that they were *his* stripes, and joy, that they were our healing. Christians are too little mindful and sensible of this, and, it may be, are somewhat guilty of that with which Ephraim is charged, Hos. xi. 3: *They knew not that I healed them.*

VER. 25. For ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned to the shepherd and bishop of your souls.

IN these few words, we have a brief and yet clear representation of the wretchedness of our natural condition, and of our happiness in Christ. The resemblance is borrowed from the same place in the prophet Isaiah, chap. liii. 6.

Not to press the comparison, or, as it is too usual with commentators, to strain it beyond the purpose, in reference to our lost estate, this is all, or the main circumstance wherein the resemblance with sheep holds—our *wandering*, as forlorn and exposed to destruction, like a sheep that has strayed and wandered from the fold. So taken, it imports, indeed, the loss of a better condition, the loss of the safety and happiness of the soul, of that good which is proper to it, as the suitable good of the brute creature here named, is, safe and good pasture.

That we may know there is no one exempt in nature from the guiltiness and misery of this wandering, the prophet is express as to the universality of it. *All we have gone astray.* And though the apostle here applies it in particular to his brethren, yet it falls not amiss to any others. *Ye were as sheep going astray.* Yea, the prophet there, to the collective universal, adds a distributive, *Every man to his own way*, or, a man to his way. They agree in this, that they all wander, though they differ in their several ways. There is an inbred proneness to stray in them all, more than in sheep, which are creatures naturally wandering, for each man hath his own way.

And this is our folly, that we flatter ourselves by comparison, and every one is pleased with himself because he is free from some wanderings of others; not considering that he is a wanderer too, though in another way; he hath his way, as those he looks on have theirs. And as men agree in wandering, though they differ in their way, so those ways agree in this, that they lead unto misery, and shall end in that. Think you there is no way to hell, but the way to open profaneness? Yes, surely, many a way that seems smooth and *clean in a man's own eyes*, and yet will end in condemnation. Truth is but one, error endless and interminable. As we say of natural life and death, so may we say in respect of spiritual the way to life is one, but there are many out of it. *Lethi mille aditus.* Each one hath not opportunity nor ability for every sin, or every degree of sin, but each sin after his own mode and power. Isa. xl. 20.

Thy tongue, it may be, wanders not in the common path-road of oaths and curses, yet it wanders in secret calumnies, in detraction and defaming of others, though so conveyed as it scarcely appears; or, if thou speak them not, yet thou art pleased to hear them. It wanders, in trifling away the precious hours of irrecoverable time, with vain unprofitable babblings in thy converse; or, if thou art much alone, or in company much silent, yet, is not thy foolish mind still hunting vanity, following this self-pleasing design or the other, and seldom, and very slightly, if at all, conversant with God and the things of heaven, which, although they alone have the truest and the highest pleasure in them, yet to thy carnal mind are tasteless and unsavory? There is scarcely anything so light and childish, that thou wilt not more willingly and liberally bestow thy retired thoughts on, than upon those excellent, incomparable delights. Oh! the foolish heart of man! when it may seem deep and serious, how often is it at Domitian's exercise in his study—*catching flies!*

Men account little of the wanderings of their hearts, and yet truly that is most of all to be considered; for *from thence are the issues of life*, Prov. iv. 23. It is the heart that hath forgotten God, and is roving after vanity: this causes all the errors of men's words and actions. A wandering heart makes wandering eyes, feet, and tongue: it is the leading wanderer that misleads all the rest. And as we are here called *straying sheep*, so, within the heart itself of each of us, there is as it were a whole wandering flock, a multitude of fictions (Gen. viii. 21), ungodly devices. The word that signifies the evil of the thought in Hebrew, here, יֵצֶר from יָצַר is taken from that which signifies feeding of a flock,

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and it likewise signifies wandering; and so these meet in our thoughts, they are a great flock and a wandering flock. This is the natural freedom of our thoughts; they are free to wander from God and heaven, and to carry us to perdition. And we are guilty of many pollutions this way, which we never acted. Men are less sensible of heart-wickedness, if it break not forth; but the heart is far more active in sin than any of the senses, or the whole body. The motion of spirits is far swifter than that of bodies. The mind can make a greater progress in any of these wanderings in one hour, than the body is able to follow in many days.

When the body is tied to attendance in the exercises wherein we are employed, yet know you not—it is so much the worse if you do not know, and feel it, and bewail it—know you not, I say, that the heart can take its liberty, and leave you nothing but a carcass? This the unrenewed heart doth continually. *They come and sit before me as my people, but their heart is after their covetousness.* Ezek. xxxiii. 31. It hath another way to go, another God to wait on.

*But are now returned.*] Whatsoever are the several ways of our straying, all our wandering originates in the aversion of the heart from God, whence of necessity follows a continual unsettledness and disquiet. The mind, *as a wave of the sea, tossed to and fro with the wind*, tumbles from one sin and vanity to another, and finds no rest; or, as a sick person tosses from one side to another, and from one part of his bed to another, and perhaps changes his bed, in hope of ease, but still it is further off, thus is the soul in all its wanderings. But shift and change as it will, no rest shall it find until it come to this *returning*. Jer. ii. 36: *Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? Thou shalt be ashamed of Egypt as thou wast of Assyria!* Nothing but sorrow and shame, till you change all those ways for this one. *Return, O Israel, says the Lord, if thou wilt return, return unto me.* It is not changing one of your own ways for another, that will profit you; but *in returning to me* is your salvation.

Seeing we find in our own experience, besides the woful end of our wanderings, the present perplexity and disquiet of them, why are we not persuaded to this, to give up with them all? *Return unto thy rest, O my soul*, says David, Psalm cxvi. 7; this were our wisdom.

But is not that God in whom we expect rest, incensed against us for our wandering? and is he not, being offended, *a consuming fire?* True, but this is the way to find acceptance and peace, and satisfying comforts in returning: come first to this Shepherd of souls, Jesus Christ, and by him, come unto the Father. *No man comes unto the Father*, says he, *but by me.* This is the *via regia*, the high and right way of returning unto God. John x. 11: *I am the good shepherd;* and ver. 9, *I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.* But if he miss this door, he shall miss salvation too. *Ye are returned*, says the apostle, *unto the shepherd and bishop of your souls.*

There be three things necessary to restore us to our happiness, whence we have departed in our wanderings: 1. To take away the guiltiness of those former wanderings. 2. To reduce us into the way again. 3. To keep and lead us in it.

Now all these are performable only by this great shepherd. 1. He did satisfy for the offence of our wanderings, and so remove our guiltiness. He himself, the shepherd, became a sacrifice for his flock, a sheep, or spotless lamb. So, Isa. liii. 6, *We like sheep have gone astray;* and immediately after the mention of our straying, it is added, *The Lord laid*, or, *made meet on him, the iniquity of us all*, of all our strayings; and ver. 7, *He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter.* He who is our shepherd, the same is the lamb for sacrifice. So our apostle, ch. i., *We are redeemed, not by silver and gold, but by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.* So, John x. 11, *He is the good shepherd that lays down his life for his sheep.* Men think not on this; many of them who have some thoughts of returning and amendment, think not that there is a satisfaction due for past wanderings; and therefore they pass by Christ, and consider not the necessity of returning to him, and by him to the Father.

2. He brings them back into the way of life: *Ye are returned.* But think not it is by their own knowledge and skill, that they discover their error, and find out the right path, or that by their own strength they return into it. No, if we would contest grammaticisms, the word here, is passive; *ye are returned*, reduced, or caused to return. But this truth hangs not on so weak notions as are often used, either for or against it. In that prophecy, Ezek. xxxiv. 16, God says, *I will seek and bring again*, &c. And, Psalm xxiii. 3, David says, *he restoreth* or *returneth my soul.* And that this is the work of this shepherd, the Lord Jesus God-man, is clearly and frequently taught in the gospel. He came for this very end: it was his errand and business in the world, *to seek and to save that which was lost.* And thus it is represented in the parable, Luke xv. 4, 5; he *goes after that which was lost until he find it*, and then, having found it, doth not only show it the way, and say to it, return, and so leave it to come after, but *he lays it on his shoulder*, and brings it home; and notwithstanding all his pains, instead of complaining against it for wandering, he rejoices in that he hath found and recovered it: *he lays it on his shoulder rejoicing.* And in this, there is as much of the resemblance as in any other thing. Lost man can no more return unsought, than a sheep that wandereth, which is observed of

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all creatures to have least of that skill. Men may have some confused thoughts of returning, but to know the way and to come, unless they be sought out, they are unable. This is David's suit, though acquainted with the fold, *I have gone astray like a lost sheep; Lord, seek thy servant.* Psal. cxix. *ult.* This did our great and good shepherd, through those difficult ways he was to pass for finding us, wherein he not only hazarded, but really laid down his life; and those shoulders which did bear the iniquity of our wanderings, by expiation, upon the same doth he bear and bring us back from it by effectual conversion.

3. He keeps and leads us on in that way into which he hath restored us. He leaves us not again to try our own skill, whether we can walk to heaven alone, being set into the path of it, but he still conducts us in it by his own hand, and that is the cause of our persisting in it, and attaining the blessed end of it. *He restoreth my soul*, says the Psalmist, Psalm xxiii. 2; and that is not all: he adds, *He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.* Those paths are the *green pastures* meant, and the *still waters* that he speaks of. And thus we may judge whether we are of his flock. Are we *led in the paths of righteousness?* Do we delight ourselves in him, and in his ways? Are they the proper refreshment of our souls? Do we find *his words sweet unto our taste?* Are we taken with the *green pastures* in it, and the crystal streams of consolations that glide through it? Can we discern *his voice*, and does it draw our hearts, so that we follow it? John x. 27.

*The shepherd and bishop.*] It was the style of kings to be called shepherds, and is the dignity of the ministers of the gospel to have both these names. But this great shepherd and bishop is peculiarly worthy of these names, as supreme: he alone is the universal shepherd and bishop, and none but an antichrist, who makes himself as Christ, killing and destroying the flock, will assume this title which belongs only to the Lord, the great owner of his flock. He himself is their great shepherd and bishop. All shepherds and bishops who are truly such, have their function and place from him; they hold of him, and follow his rule and example, in their inspection of the flock. It were the happiness of kingdoms, if magistrates and kings would set him, his love, and meekness, and equity, before their eyes in their government. And all those who are properly his bishops are under especial obligations to study this pattern, to warm their affections to the flock, and to excite a tender care of their salvation, by looking on this *arch-bishop* and *arch-shepherd* (as our apostle calls him), and in their measure, to follow his footsteps, spending their life and strength in seeking the good of his sheep, considering that they are subordinately shepherds of souls, that is, in dispensing spiritual things; so far the title is communicable.

The Lord Jesus is supremely and singularly such; they, under him, are shepherds of souls, because their diligence concerns the soul, which excludes not the body in spiritual respects, as it is capable of things spiritual and eternal, by its union with the soul. But Christ is sovereign shepherd of souls above all, and singular, in that he not only teaches them the doctrine of salvation, but purchased salvation for them, and inasmuch as he reaches the soul powerfully, which ministers by their own power can not do. He lays hold on it, and restores, and leads it, and causes it to walk in his ways. In this sense it agrees to him alone, as supreme, in the incommunicable sense.

And from his guidance, power, and love, flows all the comfort of his flock. When they consider their own folly and weakness, this alone gives them confidence, that his hand guides them; and they believe in his strength far surpassing that of the roaring lion (John x. 28–30), his wisdom, in knowing their particular state and their weakness, and his tender love in pitying them, and applying himself to it. Other shepherds, even faithful ones, may mistake them, and not know the way of leading them in some particulars, and they may be sometimes wanting in that tender affection that they owe; or, if they have that, yet they are not able to bear them up, and support them powerfully; but this shepherd is perfect in all these respects. Is. xl. 11. The young and weak Christian, or the elder at weak times, when they are big and heavy with some inward exercise of mind, which shall bring forth advantage and peace to them afterward, them he *leads gently*, and uses them with the tenderness that their weakness requires.

And, in the general, he provides for his flock, and heals them when they are any way hurt, and washes them and makes them fruitful; so that they are as that flock, described Cant. iv. 2: they are comely, but their shepherd much more so: *Formosi pecoris custos, formosior ipse.* They are given him in the Father's purpose and choice, and so, those that return, are, even while they wander, *sheep* in some other sense than the rest which perish. They are, in the secret love of election, of Christ's sheepfold, though not as yet actually brought into it. But when his time comes, wheresoever they wander, and how far off soever, even those who have strayed most, yet he restores them, and rejoices heaven with their return, and leads them till he brings them to partake of the joy that is there. That is the end of the way wherein he guides them. John x. 27, 28: *They hear my voice, and follow me.* And they shall never repent having done so. To follow him, is to follow life, for *he is the life.* He is in that glory which we desire; and where would we be, if not where he is, who, at his



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departure from the world, said, *Where I am, there they shall be also!* To this happy meeting and heavenly abode, may God, of his infinite mercy, bring us, through *Jesus Christ our Lord!* Amen.

## CHAPTER III.

VER. 1. Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any one obey not the word, they also, without the word, may be won by the conversation of the wives.

THE *tabernacle of the sun*, Psalm xix. 4, is set high in the heavens; but it is so, that it may have influence below upon the earth. And the *word of God*, which is spoken of there immediately after, as being in many ways like it, holds resemblance in this particular: it is a sublime heavenly light, and yet descends, in its use, to the lives of men, in the variety of their stations, to warm and to enlighten, to regulate their affections and actions in whatsoever course of life they are called to. By a perfect revolution or circuit, as there it is said of the sun, it visits all ranks and estates; *its going forth is from the end of heaven, and its circuit unto the ends of it, and there is nothing hid from the heat of it;* it disdains not to teach the very servants, in their low condition and employments, how to behave themselves, and sets before them no meaner example than that of Jesus Christ, which is the highest of all examples. So here, the apostle proceeds to give rules adapted to that relation which is the main one in families, that of *husbands and wives.* As for the order it is indifferent; yet, possibly, he begins here at the duties of wives, because his former rules were given to inferiors, to subjects and servants: and the duty he commends particularly here to them, is *subjection: Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection,* &c.

After men have said all they can, and much, it may be, to little purpose, in running the parallel between these two estates of life, marriage and celibacy, the result will be found, I conceive, all things being truly estimated, very little odds, even in natural respects, in the things themselves, saving only as the particular condition of persons, and the hand of Divine Providence, turn the balance the one way or the other. The writing of satires against either, or panegyrics on the one in prejudice of the other, is but a caprice of men's minds, according to their own humor; but in respect of religion, the apostle, having scanned the subject to the full, leaves it indifferent, only requiring in those who are so engaged, hearts as disengaged as may be, *that they that marry be as if they married not,* &c. 1 Cor. vii. 29, 31. Within a while, it will be all one; as he adds that grave reason, *For the fashion* [σχῆμα] *of this world passeth*—it is but a pageant, a show of an hour long [παράγει], *goes by,* and is no more seen. Thus, the great pomps and solemnities of marriages of kings and princes, in former times, where are they? Oh! how unseemly is it to have an immortal soul drowned in the esteem and affection of anything that perishes, and to be cold and indifferent in seeking after a good that will last as long as itself! Aspire to that good which is the only match for the soul, that close union with God which can not be dissolved, which he calls an everlasting marriage, Hos. ii. 19; that will make you happy, either with the other, or without it. All the happiness of the most excellent persons, and the very top of all affection and prosperity meeting in human marriages, are but a dark and weak representation of the solid joy which is in that mysterious divine union of the spirit of man with the *Father of spirits,* from whom it issues. But this by the way.

The common spring of all mutual duties, on both sides, must be supposed to be *love;* that peculiar conjugal love which makes them one, will infuse such sweetness into the authority of the husband and the obedience of the wife, as will make their lives harmonious, like the sound of a well-tuned instrument; whereas, without that, having such a universal conjuncture of interest in all their affairs, they can not escape frequent contests and discords, which is a sound more unpleasant than the jarring of untuned strings to an exact ear. And this should be considered in the choice, that it be not, as it is too often (which causeth so many domestic ills), contracted only as a bargain of outward advantages, but as a union of hearts. And where this is not, and there is something wanting in this point of affection, there, if the parties, or either of them, have any saving knowledge of God, and access to him in prayer, they will be earnest suiters for his help in this, that his hand may set right what no other can; that he who is love itself, may infuse that mutual love into their hearts now, which they should have sought sooner. And certainly, they who sensibly want this, and yet seek it not of him, what wonder is it, though they find much bitterness and discontent? Yea, where they agree, if it be only in natural affection, their observance of the duties required, is not by far either so comfortable and pleasing, or so sure and lasting, as when it ariseth from a religious and Christian love in both, which will cover many failings, and take things by the best side.

Love is the prime duty in both, the basis of all; but because the particular character of it, as proper to the wife, is conjugal obedience and subjection, therefore that is usually specified, as Eph. v. 12; *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord;* so here. Now, if it be such obedience as ought to arise from a special kind of love, then the wife would remember this, that it must not be constrained, uncheerful

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obedience: and the husband would remember, that he ought not to require base and servile obedience; for both these are contrary to that love, whereof this obedience must carry the true tincture and relish, as flowing from it: there all will hold right, where love commands, and love obeys.

This subjection, as all other, is qualified thus, that it be *in the Lord*. His authority is primitive, and binds first, and all others have their patents and privileges from him; therefore he is supremely and absolutely to be observed in all. If the husband would draw the wife to an irreligious course of life, he is not to be followed in this, but in all things indifferent, this obedience must hold: which yet forbids not a modest advice and representation to the husband, of that which is more convenient, but that done, a submissive yielding to the husband's will is the suiting of this rule. Yea, possibly, the husband may not only imprudently, but unlawfully will that which, if not in its own nature a thing unlawful, the wife by reason of his will may obey lawfully, yea, could not lawfully disobey.

Now, though this subjection was a fundamental law of pure nature, and came from that Hand, which made all things in perfect order, yet sin, which hath imbittered all human things with a curse, hath disrelished this subjection, and made it taste somewhat of a punishment (Gen. iii. 16), and that as a suitable punishment of the woman's abuse of the power she had with the man, to the drawing of him to disobedience against God.

The bitterness in this subjection arises from the corruption of nature in both; in the wife a perverse desire rather to command, or at least a repining discontent at the obligation to obey; and this is increased by the disorder, and imprudence, and harshness of husbands, in the use of their authority.

But in a Christian, the conscience of divine appointment will carry it, and weigh down all difficulties; for the wife considers her station, that she is set in it [ὑποτασσομένοι], it is the rank the Lord's hand hath placed her in, and therefore she will not break it: from respect and love to him, she can digest much frowardness in a husband, and make that her patient subjection, a sacrifice to God: Lord, I offer this to thee, and for thy sake I humbly bear it.

The worth and love of a husband may cause that respect, where this rule moves not; but the Christian wife who hath love to God, though her husband be not so comely, nor so wise, nor any way so amiable, as many others, yet, because he is her *own husband*, and because of the Lord's command in the general, and his providence in the particular disposal of his own, therefore she loves and obeys.

*That if any obey not the word.*] This supposes a particular case, and applies the rule to it, taking it for granted that a believing wife will cheerfully observe and respect a believing husband, but if he is an unbeliever, yet that unties not this engagement; yea, there is something in this case which presses it and binds it the more, a singular good which probably may follow upon obeying such. By *that good conversation*, they may be gained, who believe not the word: not that they could be fully converted without the word, but having a prejudice against the word, that may be removed by the carriage of a believing wife, and they may be somewhat mollified, and prepared, and induced to hearken to religion, and take it into consideration.

This gives not Christians a warrant to draw on themselves this task, and make themselves this work, by choosing to be joined to an unbeliever, either a profane or merely an unconverted husband or wife; but teacheth them, being so matched, what should be their great desire, and their suitable carriage in order to the attainment of it. And in the primitive Christian times, this fell out often: by the gospel preached, the husband might be converted from gross infidelity, Judaism, or Paganism, and not the wife; or the wife (which is the supposition here), and not the husband; and then came in the use of this consideration.

And this is the freedom of divine grace, to pick and choose where it will, *one of a family, or two of a tribe*, as the prophet hath it, Jer. iii. 14; and according to our Savior's word, *two in one bed, the one taken, and the other left*, Luke xvii. 34; some selected ones in a congregation, or, in a house, a child, possibly, or servant, or wife, while it leaves the rest. The apostle seems to imply particularly, that there were many instances of this, wives being converts, and their husbands unbelieving. We can determine nothing as to their conjecture, who think that there will be more of that sex, here called the *weaker vessels*, than of the other, who shall be vessels of honor, which God seasons with grace here, and hereafter will fill with glory; but this is clear, that many of them are converted, while many men, and divers of them very wise and learned men, having the same or far greater means and opportunities, do perish in unbelief. This, I say, evidences the liberty and the power of the spirit of God, that *wind that bloweth where it listeth;* and withal it suits with the word of the apostle, that the Lord this way abases those things that men account so much of, *and hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty.* 1 Cor. i. 26. Nor doth the pliableness and tenderness of their affections (though grace, once wrought, may make good use of that) make their conversion easier, but the harder rather, for through nature's corruption they would by that be led to yield more to evil than to good; but the efficacy of grace appears much in establishing their hearts in the love of God, and in making

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them, when once possessed with that, to be inflexible and invincible by the temptations of the world, and the strength and slights of Satan.

That which is here said of *their conversation*, holds of the husband in the like case, and of friends and kindred, and generally of all Christians, in reference to them with whom they converse; that their spotless, holy carriage as Christians, and in their particular station, as Christian husbands, or wives, or friends, is a very likely and hopeful means of converting others who believe not. Men who are prejudiced, observe actions a great deal more than words. In those first times specially, the blameless carriage of Christians did much to the increasing of their number.

Strive, ye wives, and others, to adorn and commend the religion you profess to others, especially those nearest you, who are averse. Give no just cause of scandal and prejudice against religion. Beware not only of gross failings and ways of sin, but of such imprudences as may expose you and your profession. Study both a holy and a wise carriage, and pray much for it. *If any of you lack wisdon, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally, and unbraideth not, and it shall be given him.* Jam. i. 5.

But if wives and other private Christians be thus obliged, how much more the ministers of the word! Oh! that we could remember our deep obligations to holiness of life! It has been rightly said, *Either teach none, or let your life teach too. Cohelleth, anima concionatrix*, the *preaching soul*, must the preacher be (Eccl. i. 1), the word of life springing from inward affection, and then, *vita concionatrix*, the *preaching life*. The Sunday's sermon lasts but an hour or two, but holiness of life is a continued sermon all the week long.

*They also without the word may be won.*] The conversion of a soul is an inestimable gain; it is a high trading and design to go about it. Oh! the precious soul, but how undervalued by most! Will we believe him who knew well the price of it, for he paid it, that the whole visible world is not worth one soul, the gaining of it all can not countervail that loss? Matt. xvi. 26. This, wives, and husbands, and parents, and friends, if themselves converted, would consider seriously, and apply themselves to pray much that their unconverted relations, in nature dead, may be enlivened, and that they may receive them from death; and they would esteem nothing, rest in no natural content or gain without that, at least, without using incessant diligence in seeking it, and their utmost skill and pains. But above all, this is the peculiar task of ministers, as the apostle often repeats it of himself, that *unto the Jews* he *became as a Jew*, that he might *gain the Jews*, &c. 1 Cor. ix. All gains on earth are base in comparison with this. *Me malè amando, me perdidi, et te solum quærendo et purè amando, me et te pariter inveni:* By loving self amiss, myself I lost; by seeking thee, and singly, sincerely loving thee, at once myself and thee I found.—(Thomas à Kempis.) A soul converted is *gained* to itself, *gained* to the pastor, or friend, or wife, or husband, who sought it, and *gained* to Jesus Christ; added to his treasury, who thought not his own precious blood too dear to lay out for this gain.

VER. 2. While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

As all graces are connected in their own nature, so it is altogether necessary that they be found in connexion for the end here propounded, the conversion of those who are strangers to religion, and possessed with false notions of it, and prejudices against it. It is not the regularity of some particular actions, nor the observance of some duties, that will serve; but it is an even uniform frame of life that the apostle here teaches Christian wives, particularly in reference to this end, the gaining or conversion of unbelieving husbands. And this we have both in that word, *their conversation*, which signifies the whole course and tract of their lives, and in the particular specifying of the several duties proper to that relation and state of life. 1. Subjection. 2. Chastity. 3. Fear. 4. Modesty in outward ornaments. 5. The inward ornaments of meekness and quietness of spirit.

The combination of these things makes up such a wife, and the exercise of them throughout her life, makes up such a conversation, as adorns and commends the religion she professes, and is a fit, and may be a successful, means of converting the husband who as yet professes it not.

*Chaste conversation.*] It is the proper character of a Christian, to study purity in all things, as the word (ἁγνὴν) in its extent signifies. Let the world turn that to a reproach, call them as you will, this is sure, that none have less fancy and presumption of *purity*, than those who have most desire of it. But the particular pureness here intended is, as it is rendered, that of *chastity*, as the word is often taken; it being a grace that peculiarly deserves that name, as the sins contrary to it are usually and deservedly called *uncleanness*. It is the pure whiteness of the soul to be chaste, to abhor and disdain the swinish puddle of lust, than which there is nothing that doth more debase the excellent soul; nothing that more evidently draws it down below itself, and makes it truly brutish. The three kinds of chastity—virginal, conjugal, and vidual, are all of them acceptable to God, and suitable to the profession of a Christian: therefore, in general only, whatsoever be our condition in life, let us in that way conform to it, and follow the apostle's rule, *possessing* these our earthen *vessels*, our bodies, in *holiness* and *honor* (by which is there expressed this same chastity); and this we shall do if we rightly remember our calling as Christians, in wha

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sort of life soever: as there he tells us, *God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness.* 1 Thess. iv. 7.

*With fear.*] Either a reverential respect to their husbands, or, the fear of God; whence flows best both that and all other observance, whether of conjugal or any other Christian duties. Be not presumptuous, as some, because you are chaste, but so contemper your conversation with a religious fear of God, that you dare not take liberty to offend him in any other thing, and, according to his institution, with a reverential fear of your husbands, shunning to offend them. But, possibly, this fear doth particularly relate to the other duty with which it was joined, *Chaste conversation with fear;* fearing the least stain of chastity, or the very least appearance of anything not suiting with it. It is a delicate timorous grace, afraid of the least air, or shadow of anything that hath but a resemblance of wronging it, in carriage, or speech, or apparel, as follows in the third and fourth verses.

Ver. 3. Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

Ver. 4. But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

That nothing may be wanting to the qualifying of a Christian wife, she is taught how to dress herself: supposing a general desire, but especially in that sex, of ornament and comeliness: the sex which began first our engagement to the necessity of clothing, having still a peculiar propensity to be curious in that, to improve the necessity to an advantage.

The direction here given, corrects the misplacing of this diligence, and addresses it right: *Let it not be of the outward man, in plaiting*, &c.

Our perverse, crooked hearts turn all we use into disorder. Those two necessities of our life, *food* and *raiment*, how few know the right measure and bounds of them! Unless poverty be our carver and cut us short, who, almost, is there, that is not bent to something excessive! Far more are beholden to the lowliness of their estate, than to the lowliness of their mind, for sobriety in these things; and yet, some will not be so bounded neither, but will profusely lavish out upon trifles, to the sensible prejudice of their estate.

It is not my purpose, nor do I think it very needful, to debate many particulars of apparel and ornament of the body, their lawfulness or unlawfulness: only,

*First*, It is out of doubt, that though clothing was first drawn on by necessity, yet, all regard of comeliness and ornament in apparel, is not unlawful; nor doth the apostle's expression here, rightly considered, fasten that upon the adorning he here speaks of. He doth no more universally condemn the use of gold for ornament, than he doth any other comely raiment, which here he means by that general word of *putting on of apparel;* for his [*not*] is comparative—*not this adorning, but the ornament of a meek spirit*, that rather, and as being much more comely and precious; as that known expression, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice.*

*Secondly*, According to the different place and quality of persons, there may be a difference in this: thus, the robes of judges and princes are not only for personal ornament, but because there is in them, especially for vulgar eyes which seldom look deeper than the outside of things, there is, I say, in that apparel a representation of authority or majesty, which befits their place; and besides this, other persons who are not in public place, men or women (who are here particularly directed), yet may have in this some mark of their rank; and in persons otherwise little distant, some allowance may be made for the habits and breeding of some beyond others, or the quality of their society, and those with whom they converse.

*Thirdly*, It is not impossible that there may be in some an affected pride in the meanness of apparel, and in others, under either neat or rich attire, a very humble unaffected mind; using it upon some of the aforementioned engagements, or such like, and yet the heart not at all upon it. *Magnus qui fictilibus utitur, tanquam argento, nec ille minor qui argento tanquam fictilibus*, says Seneca: Great is he who enjoys his earthenware as if it were plate, and not less great is the man to whom all his plate is no more than earthenware.

*Fourthly*, It is as sure as any of these, that real excess and vanity in apparel will creep in, and will always willingly convey itself under the cloak of some of these honest and lawful considerations. This is a prime piece of our heart's deceit, not only to hold out fair pretences to others, but to put the trick upon ourselves, to make ourselves believe we are right and single-minded in those things wherein we are directly serving our lusts, and feeding our own vanity.

*Fifthly*, To a sincere and humble Christian, very little either dispute or discourse concerning this will be needful. A tender conscience, and a heart purified from vanity and weaned from the world, will be sure to regulate this, and all other things of this nature, after the safest manner, and will be wary, 1, of lightness and fantastic garb in apparel, which is the very bush or sign hanging out, that tells a vain mind lodges within and, 2, of excessive costliness, which both argues and feeds the pride of the heart, and defrauds, if not others of their dues, yet, the poor of thy charity, which, in God's sight, is a due debt too. Far more comfort shalt thou have on thy deathbed, to remember that such a time, instead of putting lace on my own clothes, I helped a naked back to clothing, I

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abated somewhat of my former superfluities, to supply the poor's necessities—far sweeter will this be, than to remember that I could needlessly cast away many pounds to serve my pride, rather than give a penny to relieve the poor.

As conscientious Christians will not exceed in the thing itself, so, in as far as they use lawful ornament and comeliness, they will do it without bestowing much either of diligence or delight on the business.

To have the mind taken and pleased with such things, is so foolish and childish a thing, that if most might not find it in themselves, they would wonder at it in many others, of years and common sense. *Non bis pueri, sed semper:* not twice children, but always. And yet, truly, it is a disease that few escape. It is strange upon how poor things men and women will be vain, and think themselves somebody; not only upon some comeliness in their face or feature, which though poor, is yet a part of themselves, but of things merely without them: that they are well lodged, or well mounted, or well apparelled, either richly, or well in fashion. Light, empty minds are, like bladders, blown up with anything. And they who perceive not this in themselves, are the most drowned in it; but such as have found it out, and abhor their own follies, are still hunting and following these in themselves, to beat them out of their hearts and to shame them from such fopperies. The soul fallen from God, hath lost its true worth and beauty: and therefore it basely descends to these mean things, to serve and dress the body, and take share with it of its unworthy borrowed ornaments, while it hath lost and forgotten God, and seeks not after him, knows not that he alone is the beauty and ornament of the soul (Jer. ii. 32), his Spirit and the graces of it its rich attire, as is here particularly specified in one excellent grace, and it holds true in the rest.

The apostle doth indeed expressly, on purpose, check and forbid vanity and excess in apparel, and excessive delight in lawful decorum, but his prime end is to recommend this other ornament of the soul, *the hidden man of the heart.*

It is the thing the best philosophy aimed at, as some of their wisest men do express it, to reduce men, as much as may be, from their body to their soul; but this is the thing that true religion alone doth effectually and thoroughly, calling them off from the pampering and feeding of a morsel for the worms, to the nourishing of that immortal being infused into it, and directing them to the proper nourishment of souls, the *Bread that came down from heaven.* John vi. 27.

So here, the apostle pulls off from Christian women their vain outside ornaments; but is not this a wrong, to spoil all their dressing and fineness? No, he doth this, only to send them to a better wardrobe: there is much profit in the change.

All the gold and other riches of the temple, prefigured the excellent graces of Christians: of Christ, indeed, first, as having all fulness in himself, and as furnishing it to them, but secondarily, of Christians, as the living temples of God. So, Psalm xlv. 13, the church is *all glorious*, but it is *within.* And the embroidery, the variety of graces, the lively colors of other graces, shine best on the dark ground of humility. Christ delights to give much ornament to his church, commends what she hath, and adds more. *Thy neck is comely with chains: we will make the borders of gold.* Cant. i. 10, 11.

The particular grace the apostle recommends is particularly suitable to his subject in hand, the conjugal duty of wives; nothing so much adorning their whole carriage as this *meekness* and *quietness of spirit.* But it is, withal, the comeliness of every Christian in every estate. It is not a woman's garment or ornament, improper for men. There is somewhat (as I may say) of a particular cut or fashion of it for wives toward their husbands, and in their domestic affairs; but men, all men ought to wear of the same stuff, yea, if I may so speak, of the same piece, for it is in all one and the same spirit, and fits the stoutest and greatest commanders. Moses was a great general, and yet not less great in this virtue, *the meekest man on earth.*

Nothing is more uncomely in a wife than an uncomposed, turbulent spirit, that is put out of frame with every trifle, and inventive of false causes of disquietness and fretting to itself. And so in a husband, and in all, an unquiet, passionate mind lays itself naked, and discovers its own deformity to all. The greatest part of things that vex us, do so, not from their own nature or weight, but from the unsettledness of our minds. *Multa nos offendunt quæ non lædunt:* Many things offend us which do not hurt us. How comely is it to see a composed, firm mind and carriage, that is not lightly moved!

I urge not a stoical stupidity, but that in things which deserve sharp reproof, the mind keep in its own station and seat still, not shaken out of itself, as the most are; that the tongue utter not unseemly, rash words, nor the hand act anything that discovers the mind hath lost its command for the time. But truly, the most know so ill how to use just anger upon just cause, that it is easier, and the safer extreme, not to be angry, but still calm and serene, as the upper region; not as the place of continual tempest and storms, as the most are. Let it pass for a kind of sheepishness to be meek; it is a likeness to Him who *was as a sheep before the shearers, not opening his mouth;* it is a portion of *his* spirit.

The apostle commends his exchange of ornaments, by two things. 1. This is incorruptible, and therefore fits an incorruptible soul. Your varieties of jewels and rich apparel are perishing things; you shall one day see a heap made of all, and that all on a flame.

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And in reference to yourselves, they perish sooner. When death strips you of your nearest garment, your flesh, all the others, which were but loose upper garments above it, must off too: it gets, indeed, a covering to the grave, but the soul is left stark naked, if no other clothing be provided for it, for the body was but borrowed; then it is made bare of all. But spiritual ornaments, and this of humility, and meekness among them, remain and are incorruptible; they neither wear out, nor go out of fashion, but are still the better for the wearing, and shall last eternity, and shine there in full lustre.

And, 2. Because the opinion of others is much regarded in matter of apparel, and it is mostly in respect to this that we use ornament in it, he tells us of the account in which this is held: men think it poor and mean, nothing more exposed to contempt than the *spirit of meekness*, it is mere folly with men—that is no matter; this overweighs all their disesteem, *It is with God of great price;* and things are indeed as he values them, and no otherwise. Though it be not the country fashion, yet it is the fashion at court, yea, it is the King's own fashion, Matthew xi. 29: *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.* Some who are court-bred, will send for the masters of fashions; though they live not in the court, and though the peasants think them strange dresses, yet they regard not that, but use them as finest and best. Care not what the world say; you are not to stay long with them. Desire to have both fashions and stuffs from *court*, from heaven, this *spirit of meekness*, and it shall be sent ou. It is never right in anything with us, till we attain to this, to tread on the opinion of men, and eye nothing but God's approbation.

VER. 5. For after this manner in the old time, the holy women also who trusted in God, adorned themselves;

VER. 6. Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

THE apostle enforces his doctrine by example, the most compendious way of teaching. Hence, the right way to use the Scriptures is, to regulate our manners by them; as by their precepts, so by their examples. And for this end it is that a great part of the Bible is historical. There is not in the saints a transmigration of souls, but there is, so to speak, a oneness of soul, they being in all ages partakers of the selfsame spirit. Hence, pious and obedient wives are here called the *daughters of Sarah*. Such women are here designated as, 1. Holy; 2. Believing; 3. Firm and resolute; *not afraid with any amazement.* Though by nature they are fearful, yet they are rendered of undaunted spirits by a holy, clean, and pure conscience. Believing wives who fear God, are not terrified: their minds are established in a due obedience to God, and also toward their husbands.

VER. 7. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them, according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

YOUR wives are subject to you, but you likewise are subject to this word, by which all ought, in all stations, to be directed, and by which, however, all shall one day be judged. And are you *alike* subject as they [ὁμοίως]: parents as children, masters as servants, and kings as their subjects; all hold of a superior, and it is high treason against the majesty of God, for any, in any place of command, to dream of an unbounded absolute authority, in opposition to him.

A spirit of prudence, or *knowledge*, particularly suitable and relating to this subject, is required as the light and rule by which the husband's whole economy and carriage is to be guided. It is required that he endeavor after that civil prudence for the ordering of his affairs which tends to the good of his family: but chiefly a pious, religious prudence, for regulating his mind and carriage as a Christian husband; that he study the rule of scripture in this particular, which many do not, neither advising with it what they should do, nor laying it, by reflection, upon their past actions, examining by it what they have done. Now this is the great fault in all practical things: most know something of them, but inadvertency and inconsideration, our not ordering our ways by that light, is the thing that spoils all.

*Knowledge* is required in the wife, but more eminently in the *husband*, as the head, the proper seat of knowledge. It is possible that the wife may sometimes have the advantage of knowledge, either natural wit and judgment, or a great measure of understanding of spiritual things; but this still holds, that the husband is bound to improve the measure both of natural and of spiritual gifts, that he hath, or can attain to, and to apply them usefully to the ordering of his conjugal carriage, and that he understand himself obliged somewhat the more, in the very notion of a husband, both to seek after and to use that prudence which is peculiarly required for his due deportment. And a Christian wife, who is more largely endowed, yet will show all due respect to the measure of wisdom, though it be less, which is bestowed upon her husband.

*Dwell with them.*] This, indeed, implies and supposes their abiding with their wives, so far as their calling and lawful affairs permit; but I conceive that what it expressly means is, all the conversation and duties of that estate; that they so behave themselves in dwelling with them as becomes *men of knowledge*, wise and prudent husbands;—which returns them usually the gain of the full reverence and respect due to them, of which they rob and divest themselves, who are either of a foolish or trifling carriage, or of too austere and rigid a conversation.

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*Giving honor unto the wife.*] This, I conceive, is not, as some take it, convenient maintenance, though that is a requisite duty too, and may be taken in under this word; but it seems to be chiefly a due conjugal esteem of them, and respect to them, the husband not vilifying and despising them, which will be apt to grieve and exasperate them; not disclosing the weaknesses of the wife to others, nor observing them too narrowly himself, but hiding them both from others' and his own eyes by love; not seeing them further than love itself requires; that is, to the wise rectifying of them by mild advices and admonitions that flow from love. And to this the reasons, indeed, suit well. It seems at first a little incongruous, *honor* because *weaker*, but not when we consider the kind of honor; not of reverence as superior, for that is their part, but of esteem and respect, without which indeed love can not consist, for we can not love that which we do not in some good measure esteem. And care should be taken that they be not contemned and slighted, even because they are weaker; for of all injuries, contempt is one of the most smarting and sensible, especially to weak persons, who feel most exactly the least touches of this. *Omne infirmum naturâ querelum: Every weak being is naturally peevish;* whereas greater spirits are a little harder against opinion, and more indifferent for it. Some wives may, indeed, be of a stronger mind and judgment than their husbands, yet these rules respect the general condition of the sexes, and speak of the females as ordinarily weaker.

Again, love, which is ever to be supposed one article, and the main one (for nothing, indeed, can be right where that supposition proves false), love, I say, supposed, this reason is very enforcing, that the weaker the vessels be, the more tenderly they should be used; and the more a prudent passing by of frailties is needful, there love will study it, and bestow it the more. Yea, this tie, you know, makes two one; and that which is a part of ourselves, the more it needs in that respect, the *more comeliness we put upon it*, as the Apostle St. Paul tells us, 1 Cor. xii. 23. And this further may be considered, that there is a mutual need of this *honoring* which consists in not despising and in covering of frailties, as is even implied in this, that the woman is not called simply weak, but the *weaker*, and the husband, who is generally, by nature's advantage, or should be, the stronger, yet is weak too; for both are vessels of earth, and therefore frail; both polluted with sin, and therefore subject to a multitude of sinful follies and frailties. But as the particular frailty of their nature pleads on behalf of women for that *honor*, so, the other reason added, is taken, not from their particular disadvantage, but from their common privilege and advantage of grace as Christians, that the Christian husband and wife are equally *coheirs* of the same *grace of life*.

*As being heirs together of the grace of life.*] This is that which most strongly binds all these duties on the hearts of husbands and wives, and most strongly indeed binds their hearts together, and makes them one. If each be reconciled unto God in Christ, and so an heir of life, and one with God, then are they truly one in God with each other; and that is the surest and sweetest union that can be. Natural love hath risen very high in some husbands and wives; but the highest of it falls very far short of that which holds in God. Hearts concentrating in him, are most and excellently one. That love which is cemented by youth and beauty, when these moulder and decay, as soon they do, fades too. That is somewhat purer, and so more lasting, which holds in a natural or moral harmony of minds; yet, these likewise may alter and change by some great accident. But the most refined, most spiritual, and most indissoluble, is that which is knit with the highest and purest Spirit. And the ignorance or disregard of this, is the great cause of so much bitterness, or so little true sweetness, in the life of most married persons; because God is left out, because they meet not as one in him.

*Heirs together.*] Loath will they be to despise one another, who are both bought with the precious blood of one Redeemer, and loath to grieve one another. Being in him brought into peace with God, they will entertain true peace betwixt themselves, and not suffer anything to disturb it. They have hopes to meet, one day, where is nothing but perfect concord and peace; they will therefore live as heirs of that life here, and make their present estate as like to heaven as they can, and so, a pledge and evidence of their title to that inheritance of peace which is there laid up for them. And they will not fail to put one another often in mind of those hopes and that inheritance, and mutually to advance and further each other toward it. Where this is not the case, it is to little purpose to speak of other rules. Where neither party aspires to this heirship, live they otherwise as they will, there is one common inheritance abiding them, one inheritance of everlasting flames; and, as they do increase the sin and guiltiness of one another by their irreligious conversation, so that which some of them do wickedly here, upon no great cause, they shall have full cause for doing there; cause to curse the time of their coming together, and that shall be a piece of their exercise for ever. But happy those persons, in any society of marriage or friendship, who converse together as those that shall live eternally together in glory. This indeed is the sum of all duties.

*Life.*] A sweet word, but sweetest of all in this sense! That life above, is indeed alone worthy the name, and this we have here, in comparison, let it not be called life, but a continual dying, an incessant journey

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toward the grave. If you reckon years, it is but a short moment to him that attains the fullest old age; but reckon miseries and sorrows, it is long to him that dies young. Oh! that this only blessed life were more known, and then it would be more desired.

*Grace.*] This is the tenor of this heirship, free grace: this *life* is a free gift. Rom. vi. *ult.* No life so spotless, either in marriage or virginity, as to lay claim to this life upon other terms. If we consider but a little, what it is, and what we are, this will be quickly out of question with us; and we shall be most gladly content to hold it thus, by deed of gift, and shall admire and extol that grace which bestows it.

*That your prayers be not hindered.*] He supposes in Christians the necessary and frequent use of this; takes it for granted, that the heirs of life can not live without prayer. This is the proper breathing and language of these heirs, none of whom are dumb; they can all speak. These heirs, if they be alone, they pray alone; if heirs together, and living together, they pray together. Can the husband and wife have that love, wisdom, and meekness, which may make their life happy, and that blessing which may make their affairs successful, while they neglect God, the only giver of these and all good things? You think these needless motives, but you can not think how it would sweeten your converse if it were used: it is prayer that sanctifies, seasons, and blesses all. And it is not enough that they pray when with the family, but even husband and wife together by themselves, and also, with their children; that they, especially the mother, as being most with them in their childhood, when they begin to be capable, may draw them apart, and offer them to God, often praying with them, and instructing them in their youth; for they are pliable while young, as glass is when hot, but after, will sooner break than bend.

But above all, prayer is necessary as they are heirs of heaven, often sending up their desires thither. You that are not much in prayer, appear as if you look for no more than what you have here. If you had an inheritance and treasure above, would not your hearts delight to be there? Thus, the heart of a Christian is in the constant frame of it, but after a special manner prayer raises the soul above the world, and sets it in heaven; it is its near access unto God, and dealing with him, specially about those affairs which concern that inheritance. Now in this lies a great part of the comfort a Christian can have here; and the apostle knew this, that he would gain anything at their hands, which he pressed by this argument, that otherwise they would be *hindered in their prayers.* He knew that they who are acquainted with prayer, find such unspeakable sweetness in it, that they will rather do anything than be prejudiced in that.

Now the breach of conjugal love, the jars and contentions of husband and wife, do, out of doubt, so leaven and imbitter their spirits, that they are exceeding unfit for prayer. which is the sweet harmony of the soul in God's ears: and when the soul is so far out of tune as those distempers make it, he can not but perceive it, whose ear is the most exact of all, for he made and tuned the ear, and is the fountain of harmony. It cuts the sinews and strength of prayer, makes breaches and gaps, as wounds at which the spirits fly out, as the cutting of a vein, by which, as they speak, it bleeds to death. When the soul is calm and composed, it may behold the face of God shining on it. And those who pray together, should not only have hearts in tune within themselves in their own frame, but tuned together; especially husband and wife, who are one, they should have hearts consorted and sweetly tuned to each other for prayer. So the word is (ἐὰν συμφωνήσωσιν.) Matt. xviii. 19.

And it is true, in the general, that all unwary walking in Christians wrongs their communion with Heaven, and casts a damp upon their prayers, so as to clog the wings of it. These two mutually help one another, *prayer* and *holy conversation:* the more exactly we walk, the more fit are we for prayer: and the more we pray, the more are we enabled to walk exactly; and it is a happy life to find the correspondence of these two, *calling on the Lord,* and *departing from iniquity.* 1 Tim. ii. 19. Therefore, that you may pray much, live holily; and, that you may live holily, be much in prayer. Surely such are the heirs of glory, and this is their way to it.

VER. 8. Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.

HERE the particular rules the apostle gives to several relations, fall in again to the main current of his general exhortation, which concerns us all as Christians. The return of his discourse to this universality, is expressed in that *finally,* and the universality of these duties, in *all.* It is neither possible nor convenient to descend to every particular; but there is supposed in a Christian an ingenuous and prudent spirit, to adapt those general rules to his particular actions and conversation; squaring by them beforehand, and examining by them after. And yet therein the most fail. Men hear these as general discourses, and let them pass so; they apply them not, or, if they do, it is readily to some other person. But they are addressed to all, that each one may regulate himself by them; and so these divine truths are like a well-drawn picture, which looks particularly upon every one among the great multitude that look upon it. And this one verse hath a cluster of five Christian graces or virtues. That which is in the middle, as the stalk or root of the rest, *love* and the others growing



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out of it, two on each side, *unanimity* and *sympathy* on the one, and *pity* and *courtesy* on the other. But we shall take them as they lie.

*Of one mind.*] This doth not only mean union in judgment, but it extends likewise to affection and action; especially in so far as they relate to, and depend upon the other. And so, I conceive, it comprehends, in its full latitude a harmony and agreement of minds, and affections, and carriage in Christians, as making up one body, and a serious study of preserving and increasing that agreement in all things, but especially in spiritual things, in which their communion doth primely consist. And because in this, the consent of their judgments in matters of religion is a prime point, therefore we will consider that a little more particularly.

And *first*, What it is not.

1. It is not a careless indifferency concerning those things. Not to be troubled about them at all, nor to make any judgment concerning them, this is not a loving agreement, arising from oneness of spirit, but a dead stupidity, arguing a total spiritlessness. As the agreement of a number of dead bodies together, which indeed do not strive and contest, that is, they move not at all, because they live not; so that concord in things of religion, which is a not considering them, nor acting of the mind about them, is the fruit and sign either of gross ignorance, or of irreligion. They who are wholly ignorant of spiritual things, are content you determine and impose upon them what you will; as in the dark, there is no difference nor choice of colors, they are all one. But, 2, which is worse, in some this peaceableness about religion arises from a universal unbelief and disaffection; and that sometimes comes of the much search and knowledge of debates and controversies in religion. Men having so many disputes about religion in their heads, and no life of religion in their hearts, fall into a conceit that all is but juggling, and that the easiest way is, to believe nothing; and these agree with any, or rather with none. Sometimes it is from a profane supercilious disdain of all these things; and many there be among these of Gallio's temper, who *care for none of these things*, and who account all questions in religion, as he did, but matter of words and names. And by this all religions may agree together. But that were not a natural union produced by the active heat of the spirit, but a confusion rather, arising from the want of it; not a knitting together, but a freezing together, as cold congregates all bodies, how heterogeneous soever, sticks, stones, and water; but heat makes first a separation of different things, and then unites those of the same nature.

And to one or other of these two is reducible much of the common quietness of people's minds about religion. All that implicit Romish agreement which they boast of, what is it, but a brutish ignorance of spiritual things, authorized and recommended for that very purpose? And among the learned of them, there are as many idle differences and disputes as among any. It is an easy way, indeed, to agree if all will put out their eyes, and follow the blind guiding of their judge of controversies. This is that πάνσοφον φάρμακον, their great device for peace, to let the pope determine all. If all will resolve to be cozened by him, he will agree them all. As if the consciences of men should only find peace by being led by the nose at one man's pleasure! A way the apostle Paul clearly renounces: *Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy; for by faith ye stand.* 2 Cor. i. 24.

And though we have escaped this, yet much of our common union of minds, I fear, proceeds from no other than the afore-mentioned causes, want of knowledge, and want of affection to religion. You that boast you live conformably to the appointments of the church, and that no one hears of your noise, we may thank the ignorance of your minds for that kind of quietness. But the unanimity here required, is another thing; and before I unfold it, I shall premise this—That although it be very difficult, and it may be impossible, to determine what things are alone fundamental in religion, under the notion of difference, intended by that word, yet it is undoubted that there be some truths more absolutely necessary, and therefore accordingly more clearly revealed than some others; there are μέγαλα τοῦ νόμου, *great things of the law*, and so of the gospel. And though no part of Divine truth once fully cleared ought to be slighted, yet there are things that may be true, and still are but of less importance and of less evidence than others; and this difference is wisely to be considered by Christians, for the interest of this agreement of minds here recommended. And concerning it we may safely conclude,

1. That Christians ought to have a clear and unanimous belief of the mysteries and principles of faith; to agree in those without controversy. 2. They ought to be diligent in the research of truth in all things that concern faith and religion; and withal to use all due means for the fullest consent and agreement in them all that possibly can be attained. 3. Perfect and universal consent in all, after all industry bestowed on it, for anything we know, is not here attainable, neither between all churches, nor all persons in one and the same church; and therefore, though church-meetings and synods, as the fittest and most effectual way to this unity, should endeavor to bring the church to the fullest agreement that may be, yet they should beware lest the straining it too high in all things rather break it, and an over-diligence in appointing uniformities remove them further from it. Leaving a latitude and indifferency in things capable of it, is often a

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stronger preserver of peace and unity. But this by the way. We will rather give some few rules that may be of use to every particular Christian, toward this common Christian good of unity of mind.

1*st*, Beware of two extremes, which often cause divisions, *captivity to custom* on the one hand, and *affectation of novelty* on the other.

2*dly*, Labor for a staid mind, that will not be tossed with every *wind of doctrine*, or appearance of reason, as some who, like vanes, are easily blown to any side with mistakes of the Scriptures, either arising in their own minds or suggested by others.

3*dly*, In unclear and doubtful things be not pertinacious, as the weakest minds are readiest to be upon seeming reason, which, when tried, will possibly fall to nothing: yet they are most assured, and can not suffer a different thought in any from their own. There is naturally this *popeness* in every man's mind, and most, I say, in the shallowest; a kind of fancied *infallibility* in themselves, which makes them *contentious* (contrary to the apostle's rule, Phil. ii. 3, *Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory*), and as earnest upon differing in the smallest punctilio as in a high article of faith. Stronger spirits are usually more patient of contradiction, and less violent, especially in doubtful things; and they who see furthest are least peremptory in their determinations. The apostle, in his second epistle to Timothy, hath a word, *the spirit of a sound mind:* it is a good, sound constitution of mind not to feel every blast, either of seeming reason to be taken with it, or of cross opinion to be offended at it.

4*thly*, Join that which is there, *the spirit of love*, in this particular: not at all abating affection for every light difference. And this the most are a little to blame in; whereas the abundance of that should rather fill up the gap of these petty disagreements, that they do not appear, nor be at all sensibly to be found. No more disaffection ought to follow this, than the difference of our faces and complexions, or feature of body, which can not be found in any two alike in all things.

And these things would be of easier persuasion, if we considered, 1. How supple and flexible a thing human reason is, and therefore not lightly to be trusted to, especially in Divine things; for *here, we know but in part.* 1 Cor. xiii. 9. 2. The small importance of some things that have bred much noise and dissension in the world, as the apostle speaks of the tongue, *How little a spark, how great a fire will it kindle;* James iii. 5. And a great many of those debates which cost men so much pains and time, are as far from clear decision as when they began, and are possibly of so little moment, that if they were ended their profit would not quit the cost. 3. Consider the strength of Christian charity, which, if it dwelt much in our hearts, would preserve this union of mind amid very many different thoughts, such as they may be, and would teach us that excellent lesson the apostle gives to this purpose, Phil. iii. 15: *Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.* Let us follow our Lord unanimously in what he hath clearly manifested to us, and given us with one consent to embrace; as the spheres, notwithstanding each one hath its particular motion, yet all are wheeled about together with the first.

And this leads us to consider the further extent of this word, to agree in heart and in conversation, walking by the rule of those undoubted truths we have received. And in this I shall recommend these two things to you:

1. In the defence of the truth, as the Lord shall call us, let us be of one mind, and all as one man. Satan acts by that maxim, and all his followers have it, *Divide and conquer;* and therefore let us hold that counter-maxim, *Union invincible.*

2. In the practice of that truth, agree as one. Let your conversation be uniform, by being squared to that one rule, and in all spiritual exercises join as one; be *of one heart and mind.* Would not our public worship, think you, prove much more both comfortable and profitable, if our hearts met in it as one, so we would say of our hearing the word, as he, Acts x. 33, *We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded of God?*—if our prayers ascended up as one pillar of incense to the throne of grace; if they besieged it, as an army, *stipato agmine Deum obsidentes*, as Tertullian speaks, all surrounding it together to obtain favor for ourselves and the church? This is much with God, the *consent of hearts* petitioning. *Fama est junctas fortius ire preces:* It is believed that united prayers ascend with greater efficacy. So says our Savior, Matt. xviii. 20: *Where two or three are gathered*—not their bodies within the same wall only, for so they are but so many carcasses tumbled together, and the promise of his being among us is not made to that, *for he is the God of the living and not of the dead*, Matt. xxii. 32; it is the spirit of darkness that abides among the tombs and graves; but—*gathered in my name*, one in that one holy name, writ ten upon their hearts, and uniting them, and so thence expressed in their joint services and invocations. So he says there of them who *agree upon anything they shall ask* (συμφωνήσωσιν.) if all their hearts present and hold it up together, if they make one cry or song of it, that harmony of their hearts shall be sweet in the Lord's ears, and shall draw a gracious answer out of his hand: *if ye agree*, your joint petitions shall be as it were an arrest or decree that shall stand in heaven: *it*

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*shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.* But alas! where is our agreement? The greater number of hearts say nothing, and others speak with such wavering and such a jarring harsh noise, being out of tune, earthly, too low set, that they spoil all, and disappoint the answers. Were the censer filled with those united prayers heavenward, it would be filled with fire earthward against the enemies of the church.

And in your private society seek unanimously your own and each other's spiritual good; not only agreeing in your affairs and civil converse, but having *one heart and mind* as Christians. To eat and drink together, if you do no more, is such society as beasts may have: to do these in the excess, to eat and drink intemperately together, is a society worse than that of beasts, and below them. To discourse together of civil business, is to converse as men; but the peculiar converse of Christians in that notion, as born again to immortality, an unfading inheritance above, is to further one another toward that, to put one another in mind of heaven and heavenly things. And it is strange that men who profess to be Christians, when they meet, either fill one another's ears with lies and profane speeches, or with vanities and trifles, or, at the best, with the affairs of the earth, and not a word of those things that should most possess the heart, and where the mind should be most set, but are ready to reproach and taunt any such thing in others. What! are you ashamed of Christ and religion? Why do you profess it then? Is there such a thing, think ye, as the *communing of saints?* If, not, why say you believe it? It is a truth, think of it as you will. The public ministry will profit little any where, where a people, or some part of them, are not thus one, and do not live together as of one mind, and use diligently all due means of edifying one another in their holy faith. How much of the primitives Christians' praise and profit is involved in the word, *They were together* [ὁμοθυμαδὸν] *with one accord, with one mind:* and so they grew: *the Lord added to the church.* Acts ii. 1, 44, 47.

Consider, 1. How the wicked are one in their ungodly designs and practices. *The scales of Leviathan,* as Luther expresses it, are *linked together;* shall not the Lord's followers be one in him? They unite to undermine the peace of the church; shall not the godly join their prayers to countermine them?

2. There is in the hearts of all the saints one spirit; how then can they be but one? Since they have the same purpose and journey, and tend to the same home, why should they not walk together in that way? When they shall arrive there, they shall be fully one, and of one mind, not a jar nor difference, all their harps perfectly in tune to that one new song.

*Having compassion.*] This testifies, that it is not a bare speculative agreement of opinions that is the badge of Christian unity; for this may accidentally be, where there is no further union; but that they are themselves one, and have one life, in that they feel how it is one with another. There is a living sympathy among them, as making up one body, animated with one spirit: for that is the reason why the members of the body have that mutual feeling, even the most remote and distant, and the most excellent with the meanest. This the apostle urges at large, Rom. xii. 4, and 1 Cor. xii. 14–17.

And this lively sense is in every living member of the body of Christ toward the whole, and toward each other particular part. This makes a Christian rejoice in the welfare and good of another, as if it were his own, and feel their griefs and distresses, as if himself were really a sharer in them; for the word comprehends all feeling together, feeling of joy as well as grief. Hebrews xiii. 3; 1 Cor. xii. 26. And always, where there is most of grace and of the spirit of Jesus Christ, there is most of this sympathy. The Apostle St. Paul, as he was eminent in all grace, had a large portion of this. 2 Cor. xi. 29. And of this ought to be in reference to their outward condition, much more in spiritual things there should be rejoicing at the increases and flourishing of grace in others. That base envy which dwells in the hearts of rotten hypocrites, who would have all engrossed to themselves, argues that they move not further than the compass of *self;* that the pure love of God, and the sincere love of their brethren flowing from it, are not in them. But when the heart can unfeignedly rejoice in the Lord's bounty to others, and the lustre of grace in others, far outshining their own, truly it is an evidence that what grace such a one hath, is upright and good, and that the law of love is engraven on his heart. And where that is, there will be likewise, on the other side, a compassionate tender sense of the infirmities and frailties of their brethren; whereas some account it a sign of much advancement and spiritual proficiency, to be able to sit in judgment upon the qualifications and actions of others, and to lavish out severe censures round about them: to sentence one weak and of poor abilities, and another proud and lofty, and a third covetous, *&c.;* and thus to go on in a censor-like magisterial strain. But it were truly an evidence of more grace, not to get upon the bench to judge them, but to sit down rather and mourn for them, when they are manifestly and really faulty, and as for their ordinary infirmities, to consider and bear them. These are the characters we find in the Scriptures, of stronger Christians, Rom. xv. 1; Gal. vi. 1. This holy and humble sympathy argues indeed a strong Christian. *Nil tam spiritualem virum indicat, quam peccati alieni tractatio: Nothing truly shows a spiritual man so much, as the dealing with another man's sin.* Far will he be from the ordinary way of insulting and trampling upon the weak, or using rigor and bitterness, even against some gross falls of a Christian: but

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will rather vent his compassion in tears, than his passion in fiery railings; will bewail the frailty of man, and our dangerous condition in this life, amidst so many snares and temptations, and such strong and subtle enemies.

*2dly.* As this sympathy works toward particular Christians in their several conditions, so, by the same reason, it acts, and that more eminently, toward the church, and the public affairs that concern its good. And this, we find, hath breathed forth from the hearts of the saints in former times, in so many pathetical complaints and prayers for Zion. Thus David in the saddest times, when he might seem most dispensable to forget other things, and be wholly taken up with lamenting his own fall, yet, even there, he leaves not out the church, Psalm. li. 17: *In thy good pleasure, do good to Zion.* And though his heart was broken all to pieces, yet the very pieces cry no less for the building of Jerusalem's wall, than for the binding up and healing of itself. And in that cxxiid Psalm, which seems to be the expression of his joy on being exalted to the throne and sitting peaceably on it, yet he still thus prays for *the peace of Jerusalem.* And the penman of the cxxxviiith Psalm, makes it an execrable oversight to forget Jerusalem, or to remember it coldly or secondarily: no less will serve him than to *prefer it to his chief joy.* Whatsoever else is *top* or *head of his joy* (as the word is), Jerusalem's welfare shall be its crown, shall be set above it. And the prophet, whoever it was, that wrote that ciid Psalm, and in it poured out that prayer from *an afflicted soul*, comforts himself in this, that Zion shall be favored. *My days are like a shadow that declineth, and I am withered like grass*, but it matters not what becomes of me; let me languish and wither away, provided Zion flourish; though I feel nothing but pains and troubles, *yet, Thou wilt arise and show mercy to Zion:* I am content: that satisfies me.

But where is now this spirit of high sympathy with the church? Surely, if there were any remains of it in us, it is now a fit time to exert it. If we be not altogether dead, surely we shall be stirred with the voice of those late strokes of God's hand, and be driven to more humble and earnest prayer by it. When will men change their poor, base grumblings about their private concerns, Oh! what shall I do? *&c.*, into strong cries for the church of God, and the public deliverance of all these kingdoms from the raging sword? But vile selfishness undoes us, the most looking no further. If themselves and heirs might be secured, how many would regard little what became of the rest! As one said, *when I am dead let the world be fired.* But the Christian mind is of a larger sphere, looks not only upon more than itself in present, but even to after times and ages, and can rejoice in the good to come, when itself shall not be here to partake of it: it is more dilated, and liker unto God, and to our head, Jesus Christ. *The Lord*, says the prophet, Isa. lxiii. 9, *in all his people's affliction, was afflicted himself.* And Jesus Christ accounts the sufferings of his body, the church, his own: *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Acts ix. 4. The heel was trod upon on earth, and the head crieth from heaven, as sensible of it. And this in all our evils, especially our spiritual griefs, is a high point of comfort to us, that our Lord Jesus is not insensible of them. This emboldens us to complain ourselves, and to put in our petitions for help to the throne of grace, through his hand, knowing that when he presents them, he will speak his own sense of our condition, and move for us as it were for himself, as we have it sweetly expressed, Heb. iv. 15, 16. Now, as it is our comfort, so it is our pattern.

*Love as brethren.*] Hence springs this feeling we speak of: love is the cause of union, and union the cause of sympathy, and of that unanimity mentioned before. They who have the same spirit uniting and animating them, can not but have the same mind and the same feelings. And this spirit is derived from that head, Christ, in whom Christians *live, and move, and have their being*, their new and excellent being, and so, living in him, they love him, and are one in him: they are *brethren*, as here the word is; their fraternity holds in him. He is the head of it, *the first-born among many brethren*, Rom. viii. 29. Men are brethren in two natural respects, their bodies are of the same earth, and their souls breathed from the same God; but this third fraternity which is founded in Christ, is far more excellent and more firm than the other two; for being one in him, they have there taken in the other two, inasmuch as in him is our whole nature: he is the *man Christ Jesus.* But to the advantage, and it is an infinite one, of being one in him, we are united to the divine nature in him, *who is God blessed for ever*, Rom. ix. 5; and this is the highest, certainly, and the strongest union that can be imagined. Now this is *a great mystery*, indeed, as the apostle says, Eph. v. 32, speaking of this same point, the union of Christ and his church, whence their union and communion one with another, who make up that body, the church, is derived. In Christ every believer is *born of God*, is his son; and so, they are not only brethren, one with another, who are so born, but Christ himself owns them as his brethren; *Both he who sanctifies, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.* Heb. ii. 11.

Sin broke all to pieces, man from God, and men from one another. Christ's work in the world was, *union.* To make up these breaches he came down, and began the union which was his work, in the wonderful union made in his person that was to work it, making God and man one. And as the nature

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of man was reconciled, so, by what he performed, the persons of men are united to God. Faith makes them one with Christ, and he makes them one with the Father, and hence results this oneness among themselves; concentring and meeting in Jesus Christ, and in the Father through him, they are made one together. And that this was his great work, we may read in his prayer, John xvii., where it is the burden and main strain, the great request he so reiterates, *That they may be one, as we are one*, ver. 11. A high comparison, such as man durst not name, but after him who so warrants us! And again, ver. 21, *That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.*

So that certainly, where this exists, it is the ground work of another kind of friendship and love than the world is acquainted with, or is able to judge of, and hath more worth in one drachm of it, than all the quintessence of civil or natural affection can amount to. The friendships of the world, the best of them, are but tied with chains of glass; but this fraternal love of Christians is a golden chain, both more precious, and more strong and lasting; the others are worthless and brittle.

The Christian owes and pays the general charity and good will to all; but peculiar and intimate friendship he can not have, except with such as come within the compass of this fraternal love, which, after a special manner, flows from God, and returns to him, and abides in him, and shall remain unto eternity.

Where this love is and abounds, it will banish far away all those dissensions and bitternesses, and those frivolous mistakings, which are so frequent among most persons. It will teach men wisely and gently to admonish one another, where it is needful; but further than that, it will pass by many offences and failings, it will *cover a multitude of sins*, and will very much sweeten society, making it truly profitable; therefore, the psalmist calls it both *good and pleasant, that brethren dwell together in unity;* it perfumes all, as the precious ointment upon the head of Aaron. Psalm cxxxiii. 2, 3.

But many who are called Christians are not indeed of this brotherhood, and therefore, no wonder they know not what this love means, but are either of restless, unquiet spirits, *biting and devouring one another*, as the apostle speaks, or, at the best, only civilly smooth and peaceable in their carriage, rather scorners than partakers of this spiritual love and fraternity. These are strangers to Christ, not brought into acquaintance and union with him, and therefore void of the life of grace, and the fruits of it, whereof this is a chief one. Oh! how few among multitudes that throng in as we do here together, are indeed partakers of the *glorious liberty of the sons of God*, or ambitious of that high and happy estate!

As for you that know these things, and have a portion in them, who have your *communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ*, 1 John i. 3, I beseech you adorn your holy profession, and testify yourselves the disciples and the brethren of Jesus Christ, by this mutual love. Seek to understand better what it is, and to know it more practically. Consider that source of love, that *love which the Father hath bestowed upon us*, in this, *that we should be called the sons of God*, 1 John iii. 1, and so be brethren, and thence draw more of this sweet stream of love. *God is love*, says the same apostle; therefore, surely, where there is most of God, there is most of this divine grace, this holy love. Look upon and study much that infinite love of God and his son Jesus Christ toward us. *He gave his only begotten Son;* the Son *gave himself;* he sweetened his bitter cup with his transcendant love, and this he hath recommended to us, that *even as he loved us, so should we love one another.* John xv. 12. We know we can not reach this highest pattern; that is not meant; but the more we look on it, the higher we shall reach in this love, and shall learn some measure of such love on earth, as is in heaven; and that which so begins here, shall there be perfected.

*Be pitiful, be courteous.*] The roots of plants are hidden under ground, so that themselves are not seen, but they appear in their branches, and flowers, and fruits, which argue there is a root and life in them: thus, the graces of the Spirit planted in the soul, though themselves invisible, yet discover their being and life in the tract of a Christian's life, his words, and actions, and the frame of his carriage. Thus faith shows that *it lives*, as the Apostle St. James teacheth at large, Jam. ii. 14, *&c.* And thus love is a grace of so active a nature, that it is still working, and yet never weary. *Your labor of love*, says the apostle, Heb. vi. 10; it labors, but delight makes the hardest labor sweet and easy. And so proper is action to it, that all action is null without it. 1 Cor. xiii. 1–3. Yea, it knits faith and action together; it is the link that unites them. *Faith worketh*, but it is, as the apostle teaches us, *by love.* Gal. v. 6. So, then, where this root is, these fruits will spring from it and discover it, *pity* and *courtesy.*

These are of a larger extent in their full sphere, than the preceding graces; for, from a general love due to all, they act toward all, to men, or humanity, in the general; and this not from a bare natural tenderness, which softer complexions may have, nor from a prudent moral consideration of their possible falling under the like or greater calamities, but out of obedience to God, who requires this mercifulness in all his children, and can not own them for his, unless in this they resemble him. And it is indeed an evidence of a truly Christian mind, to have much of this pity to the miseries of all, being rightly prin-

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cipled, and acting after a pious and Christian manner toward the sick and poor, of what condition soever; yea, pitying most the spiritual misery of ungodly men, their hardness of heart, and unbelief, and earnestly wishing their conversion; not repining at the long suffering of God, as if thou wouldst have the bridge cut because thou art over, as St. Augustine speaks, but longing rather to see that *long suffering and goodness of God lead them to repentance*, Rom. ii. 4; being grieved to see men ruining themselves, and diligently working their own destruction, *going in any way of wickedness* (as Solomon speaks of one particularly), *as an ox to the slaughter, or a fool to the correction of the stocks*, Prov. vii. 22. Certainly, the ungodly man is an object of the highest pity.

But there is a special debt of this pity to those whom we love as brethren in our Lord Jesus: they are most closely linked to us by a peculiar fraternal love. Their sufferings and calamities will move the bowels that have Christian affection within them. Nor is it an empty, helpless pity, but carries with it the real communication of our help to our utmost power. [ἐυσπλαγχνοι.] Not only bowels that are moved themselves with pity, but that move the hand to succor; for by this word, the natural affection of parents, and of the more tender parent, the mother, is expressed, who do not idly behold and bemoan their children being sick or distressed, but provide all possible help; their bowels are not only stirred, but dilated and enlarged toward them.

And if our feeling bowels and helping hand are due to all, and particularly to the godly, and we ought to pay this debt in outward distresses, how much more in their soul-afflictions! the rather, because these are most heavy in themselves, and least understood, and therefore least regarded; yea, sometimes rendered yet heavier by natural friends, possibly by their bitter scoffs and taunts, or by their slighting, or, at best, by their misapplying of proper helps and remedies, which, as unfit medicines, do rather exasperate the disease; therefore they that do understand, and can be sensible of that kind of wound, ought so much the more to be tender and pitiful toward it, and to deal mercifully and gently with it. It may be, very weak things sometimes trouble a weak Christian; but there is in the spirit of the godly, an humble condescension learned from Christ, who *broke not the bruised reed, nor quenched the smoking flax.*

The least difficulties and scruples in a tender conscience, should not be roughly encountered; they are as a knot in a silken thread, and require a gentle and wary hand to loose them.

Now, this tenderness of bowels and inclination to pity all, especially Christians, and them especially in their peculiar pressures, is not a weakness, as some kind of spirits take it to be; this, even naturally, is a generous pity in the greatest spirits. Christian pity is not womanish, yea, it is more than manly, it is Divine. There is of natural pity most in the best and most ingenuous natures, but where it is spiritual, it is a prime lineament of the image of God; and the more absolute and disengaged it is, in regard of those toward whom it acts, the more it is like unto God; looking upon misery as a sufficient incentive of pity and mercy, without the ingredient of any other consideration. It is merely a vulgar piece of goodness, to be helpful and bountiful to friends, or to such as are within appearance of requital; it is a trading kind of commerce that: but pity and bounty, which need no inducements but the meeting of a fit object to work on, where it can expect nothing, save only the privilege of doing good (which in itself is so sweet), is Godlike indeed. He is rich in bounty without any necessity, yea, or possibility of return from us; for we have neither anything to confer upon him, nor hath he need of receiving anything, who is the Spring of goodness and of being.

And that we may the better understand him in this, he is pleased to express this his merciful nature in our notion and language, by *bowels of mercy and pity*, Isa. liv. 7, 8, and the *stirring* and *sounding* of them, Hos. xi. 8; by *the pity of a father*, Psalm ciii. 13, and by that *of a mother*, Isa. xlix. 15; as if nothing could be tender and significant enough to express his compassions. Hence, our redemption, Isa. lxiii. 9; hence, all our hopes of happiness. The gracious Lord saw his poor creatures undone by sin, and no power in heaven or on earth able to rescue them, but his own alone; therefore his pity was moved, and his hand answers his heart. *His own arm brought salvation;* he sent *the deliverer out of Zion, to turn away iniquity from Jacob.* Romans xi. 26. And in all exigencies of his children, he is overcome with their complaints, and can not hold out against their moanings. He may, as Joseph, seem strange for a while, but can not act that strangeness long. His heart moves and sounds to theirs, gives the echo to their griefs and groans; as they say of two strings that are perfect unisons, touch the one, the other also sounds. *Surely I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself. . . . Is Ephraim my dear son?* Jer. xxxi. 18. Oh! the unspeakable privilege to have him for our Father, who is *the Father of mercies and compassions*, and those not barren, fruitless pityings, for he is withal *the God of all consolations.* Do not think that he can shut out a bleeding soul that comes to him, or refuse to take, and to bind up, and heal a broken heart that offers itself to him, puts itself into his hand, and entreats his help. Doth he require pity of us, and doth he give it to us, and is it not infinitely more in himself? All that is in angels and men, is but an insensible drop to that Ocean.

Let us then consider, that we are obliged both to pity, especially toward our Christian

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brethren, and to use all means for their help within our reach: to have bowels stirred with the reports of such bloodsheds and cruelties as come to our ears, and to bestir ourselves according to our places and power for them. But surely all are to move this one way for their help, to run to the *Throne of Grace.* If your bowels sound for your brethren, let them sound that way for them, to represent their estate to Him who is highest, both in pity and in power, for he expects to be remembered by us: he put that office upon his people, to be his recorders for Zion, and they are traitors to it who neglect the discharge of that trust.

*Courteous.*] The former relates to the afflictions of others, this to our whole carriage with them in any condition. And yet, there is a particular regard to be paid to it in communicating good, in supplying their wants, or comforting them that are distressed; that it be not done, or rather, I may say, undone in doing, with such supercilious roughness, venting itself either in looks or words, or any way, as sours it, and destroys the very being of a benefit, and turns it rather into an injury. And generally, the whole conversation of men is made unpleasant by cynical harshness and disdain.

This courteousness which the apostle recommends, is contrary to that evil, not only in the surface and outward behavior, no: religion doth not prescribe, nor is satisfied with such courtesy as goes no deeper than words and gestures, which sometimes is most contrary to that singleness which religion owns. These are the upper garments of malice; saluting him aloud in the morning, whom they are undermining all the day. Or sometimes, though more innocent, yet it may be troublesome, merely by the vain affectation and excess of it. Even this becomes not a wise man, much less a Christian. An overstudy or acting of that, is a token of emptiness, and is below a solid mind. Though Christians know such things, and could outdo the studiers of it, yet they (as it indeed deserves) do despise it. Nor is it that graver and wiser way of external plausible deportment, that answers fully this word: it is the outer half, indeed, but the thing is [φιλοφροσύνη] a radical sweetness in the temper of the mind, that spreads itself into a man's words and actions; and this not merely natural, a gentle, kind disposition (which is indeed a natural advantage that some have), but this is spiritual, a new nature descended from heaven, and so, in its original and kind, far excelling the other; it supplies it where it is not in nature, and doth not only increase it where it is, but elevates it above itself, renews it, and sets a more excellent stamp upon it. Religion is in this mistaken sometimes, in that men think it imprints an unkindly roughness and austerity upon the mind and carriage. It doth indeed bar and banish all vanity and lightness, and all compliance and easy partaking with sin. Religion strains, and quite breaks that point of false and injurious courtesy, to suffer thy brother's soul to run the hazard of perishing, and to share in his guiltiness, by not admonishing him after that seasonable, and prudent, and gentle manner (for that indeed should be studied) which becomes thee as a Christian, and that particular respective manner which becomes thy station. These things rightly qualifying it, it doth no wrong to good manners and the courtesy here enjoined, but is truly a part of it, by due admonitions and reproofs to seek to reclaim a sinner; for it were the worst unkindness not to do it. *Thou shalt not hate thy brother, thou shalt in anywise rebuke thy brother, and not suffer sin upon him.* Levit. xix. 17.

But that which is true lovingness of heart and carriage, religion doth not only in no way prejudice, but you see requires it in the rule, and where it is wrought in the heart, works and causes it there; fetches out that crookedness and harshness which are otherwise invincible in some humors: *Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros: Makes the wolf dwell with the lamb.* This Christians should study, and belie the prejudices which the world take up against the powers of godliness; they should study to be inwardly so minded, and of such outward behavior, as becomes that Spirit of Grace which dwells in them, endeavoring to gain *those that are without*, by their kind, obliging conversation.

In some copies, it is [ταπεινόφρονες] *humble;* and indeed, as this is excellent in itself, and a chief characteristic of a Christian, it agrees well with all those mentioned, and carries along with it this inward and real, not acted courteousness. Not to insist on it now, it gains at all hands with God and with men; receives much grace from God, and kills envy, and commands respect and good will from men.

Those showers of grace that slide off from the lofty mountains, rest on the valleys, and make them fruitful. *He giveth grace to the lowly*, loves to bestow it where there is most room to receive it, and most return of ingenuous and entire praises upon the receipt, and such is the humble heart. And truly, as much humility gains much grace, so it grows by it.

It is one of the world's reproaches against those who go beyond their size in religion, that they are proud and self-conceited. Christians, beware there be nothing in you justifying this. Common knowledge and gifts may *puff up*, but grace does not.

He whom the Lord loads most with his richest gifts, stoops lowest, as pressed down with the weight of them. *Ille est qui superbire nescit, cui Deus ostendit misericordiam suam* The free love of God humbles that heart most to which it is most manifested.

And toward men, humility graces all grace and all gifts: it glorifies God, and teaches so to do. It is *conservatrix virtutum*, the *pre-*

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*server of graces.* Sometimes it seems to wrong them by hiding them; but indeed, it is their safety. Hezekiah, by a vain showing of his jewels and treasures, forfeited them all: *Prodendo perdidit.*

VER. 9. Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise, blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

OPPOSITION helps grace both to more strength and more lustre. When Christian charity is not encountered by the world's malignance, it hath an easier task; but assaulted and overcoming, it shines the brighter, and rises the higher; and thus it is when it *renders not evil for evil.*

To repay good with evil is, among men, the top of iniquity; yet this is our universal guiltiness toward God, he multiplying mercies, and we vying with multiplied sins: as the Lord complains of Israel, *As they were increased, so they sinned.* The lowest step of mutual good among men is, not to be bent to provoke others with injuries, and, being unoffended, to offend none. But this, not to repay offences, nor *render evil for evil*, is a Christian's rule; and yet, further, to return *good* for *evil*, and *blessing* for *cursing*, is not only counselled (as some vainly distinguish), but commanded, Matt. v. 44.

It is true, the most have no ambition for this degree of goodness; they aspire no further than to do or say no evil unprovoked, and think themselves sufficiently just and equitable, if they keep within that; but this is lame, is only half the rule. Thou thinkest injury obliges thee, or, if not so, yet excuses thee, to revenge, or at least disobliges thee, unties thy engagement of wishing and doing good. But these are all gross practical errors. For,

1st. The second injury done by way of revenge, differs from the first that provoked it little or nothing, but only in point of time; and certainly, no one man's sin can procure privilege to another, to sin in that or the like kind. If another hath broken the bonds of his allegiance and obedience to God, and of charity to thee, yet thou art not the less tied by the same bonds still.

2dly. By revenge of injuries thou usurpest upon God's prerogative, who is *The Avenger*, as the apostle teaches, Rom. xii. 19. This doth not forbid either the magistrate's sword for just punishment of offenders, or the soldier's sword in a just war; but such revenges as, without authority, or a lawful call, the pride and perverseness of men do multiply one against another; in which is involved a presumptuous contempt of God and his supreme authority, or at least, the unbelief and neglect of it.

3dly. It can not be genuine upright goodness that hath its dependance upon the goodness of others who are about us: as they say of the vain-glorious man, his virtue lieth in the beholder's eye. If thy meekness and charity be such as lieth in the good and mild carriage of others toward thee, in their hands and tongues, thou art not owner of it intrinsically. Such quiet and calm, if none provoke thee, is but an accidental, uncertain cessation of thy turbulent spirit unstirred; but move it, and it exerts itself according to its nature, sending up that mud which lay at the bottom: whereas true grace doth then most manifest what it is, when those things which are most contrary, surround and assault it; it can not correspond and hold game with injuries and railings; it hath no faculty for that, for *answering evil with evil.* A tongue inured to graciousness, and mild speeches, and blessings, and a heart stored so within, can vent no other, try it and stir it as you will. A Christian acts and speaks, not according to what others are toward him, but according to what he is through the grace and Spirit of God in him; as they say, *Quicquid recipitur, recipitur ad modum recipientis:* The same things are differently received, and work differently, according to the nature and way of that which receives them. A little spark blows up one of a sulphureous temper, and *many coals*, greater injuries and reproaches, are quenched and lose their force, being thrown at another of a *cool spirit*, as the original expression is, Prov. xvii. 27.

They who have malice, and bitterness, and cursings within, though these sleep, it may be, yet, awake them with the like, and the provision comes forth *out of the abundance of the heart:* give them an ill word, and they have another, or two for one, in readiness for you. So, where the soul is furnished with spiritual blessings, their blessings come forth, even in answer to reproaches and indignities. *The mouth of the wise is a tree of life*, says Solomon (Prov. x. 11); it can bear no other fruit, but according to its kind, and the nature of the root. An honest, spiritual heart, pluck at it who will, they can pull no other fruit than such fruit. Love and meekness lodge there, and therefore, whosoever knocks, these make the answer.

Let the world account it a despicable simplicity, seek you still more of that dovelike spirit, the spirit of meekness and blessing. It is a poor glory to vie in railings, to contest in that faculty, or in any kind of vindictive returns of evil: the most abject creatures have abundance of that great spirit, as foolish, poor-spirited persons account it; but *it is the glory of man to pass by a transgression* (Prov. xix. 11), it is the noblest victory. And as we mentioned, the highest example, God, is our pattern in love and compassions: we are well warranted to endeavor to be like him in this. Men esteem much more highly some other virtues which make more show, and trample upon these, love, and compassion, and meekness. But though these violets grow low, and are of a dark color, yet, they are of a very sweet and diffusive smell, odoriferous graces; and the Lord propounds him-



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self our example in them, Matt. v. 44–48. To *love them that hate you, and bless them that curse you*, is to be truly *the children of your Father, your* Father *which is in heaven.* It is a kind of perfection: v. 48: *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good.* Be you like it: howsoever men behave themselves, keep you your course, and let your benign influence, as you can, do good to all. And Jesus Christ sets in himself these things before us, *learn of me*, not to heal the sick, or raise the dead, but *learn, for I am meek and lowly in heart*, Matt. xi. 29. And if you be his followers, that is your way, as the apostle here addeth, *Hereunto are you called;* and this is the end of it, agreeably to the way, *that you may inherit a blessing.*

[Εἰδότες ὅτι] *Knowing that.*] Understanding aright the nature of your holy calling, and then, considering it wisely, and conforming to it.

Those who have nothing beyond an external calling and profession of Christianity, are wholly blind in this point, and do not think what this imports, *A Christian.* Could they be drawn to this, it were much, it were indeed all, to know to what they are called, and to answer to it, to walk like it. But as one calls a certain sort of lawyers, *indoctum doctorum genus*, we may call the most, *an unchristian kind of Christians.*

Yea, even those who are really partakers of this spiritual and effectual call, yet are often very defective in this; in viewing their rule, and laying it to their life, their hearts, and words, and actions, and squaring by it; in often asking themselves, suits this my calling? Is this like a Christian? It is a main point in any civil station, for a man to have a carriage suitable and convenient to his station and condition, that his actions become him: *Caput artis est decere quod facias.* But how many incongruities and solecisms do we commit, forgetting ourselves, who we are, and what we are called to; to what is our duty, and to what, as our portion and inheritance. And these indeed agree together; we are *called* to an *undefiled, a holy inheritance*, and therefore, *called* likewise to be *holy* in our way to it; for that contains all. We are *called* to a better estate at home, and *called* to be fitted for it while we are here; *called* to an *inheritance of light*, and therefore, *called* to *walk* as *children of light;* and so here, *called* to *blessing* as our inheritance, and to *blessing* as our duty; for this [εἰς τοῦτο. *thereunto*] relates to both, looks back to the one, and forward to the other, the way, and the end, both *blessing.*

The fulness of this inheritance is reserved till we come to that land where it lieth; there it abideth us; but the earnests of that fulness of blessing are bestowed on us here: *spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ* (Eph. i. 3); they descend from those heavenly places upon the heart, that precious name of our Lord Jesus poured on our hearts. If we be indeed interested in him (as we pretend), and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, we are put in possession of that blessing of forgiveness of sin, and on terms of love and amity with the Father, being reconciled by the blood of his Son, and then blessed with the anointing of the Spirit, the graces infused from heaven. Now, all these do so cure the bitter, accursed distempers of the natural heart, and so perfume it, that it can not well breathe anything but sweetness and blessing toward others: being itself thus blessed of the Lord, it echoes blessing both to God and men, echoes to his blessing of it, and its words and whole carriage are *as the smell of a field that the Lord hath blessed*, as old Isaac said of his son's garments, Gen. xxvii. 27. The Lord having spoken pardon to a soul, and instead of the curse due to sin, blessed it with a title to glory, it easily and readily speaks pardon, and not only pardon, but blessing also, even to those that outrage it most, and deserve worst of it; reflecting still on that, Oh! what deserved I at my Lord's hands! When, so many talents are forgiven me, shall I stick at forgiving a few pence!

And then, *called to inherit a blessing;* every believer *an heir of blessing!* And not only are the spiritual blessings he hath received but even his largeness of blessing others is a pledge to him, an evidence of that heirship; as those who are prone to cursing though provoked, yet may look upon that as a sad mark, that they are heirs of a curse. Psalm. cxix. 17. *As ye loved cursing, so let it come unto him.* Shall not they who delight in cursing, have enough of it, when they shall hear that doleful word, *Go, ye cursed*, &c.? And, on the other side, as for the sons of blessing, who spared it not to any, the blessing they are heirs to is blessedness itself, and they are to be entered into it by that joyful speech, *Come, ye blessed of my Father.*

Men can but bless one another in good wishes, and can bless the Lord only in praises and applauding his blessedness; but the Lord's blessing is, really *making blessed;* an operative word, which brings the thing with it.

*Inherit a blessing.*] Not called to be exempted from troubles and injuries here, and to be extolled and favored by the world, but, on the contrary, rather to suffer the utmost of their malice, and to be the mark of their arrows, of wrongs, and scoffs, and reproaches. But it matters not, this weighs down all, *you are called to inherit a blessing*, which all their cursings and hatred can not deprive you of. For as this inheriting of blessing enforces the duty of blessing others upon a Christian, so it encourages him to go through the hardest contrary measure he receives from the world. If the world should bless you, and applaud you never so loudly, ye their blessings can not be called an inherit-

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ance; they fly away, and die out in the air, have no substance at all, much less that endurance that may make them an inheritance. *Qui thesaurum tuum alieno in ore constitutis, ignoras quod arca ista non clauditur?* You who trust your treasure to another man's keeping, are you aware that you are leaving it in an open chest? And more generally, is there anything here that deserves to be called? The surest inheritances are not more than for term of life to any one man: their abiding is for others who succeed, but he removes. *Si hæc sunt vestra, tollite ea vobiscum* (S. BERNARD): If these things are yours, take them away with you. And when a man is to remove from all he hath possessed and rejoiced in here, then, *fool* indeed, if nothing be provided for the longer (O! how much longer) abode he must make elsewhere! Will he not then bewail his madness, that he was hunting a shadow all his lifetime? And may be, he is turned out of all his quiet possessions and easy dwelling before that (and in these times we may the more readily think of this); but at the utmost at night, when he should be for most rest, when that sad night comes after this day of fairest prosperity, the unbelieving, unrepenting sinner lies down in sorrow, in a woful bed. Then must he, whether he will or no, enter on the possession of this inheritance of everlasting burnings. He hath an inheritance indeed, but he had better want it, and himself too be turned to nothing. Do you believe there are treasures which neither thief breaks into, nor is there any inward moth to corrupt them, an inheritance which, though the whole world be turned upside down, is in no hazard of a touch of damage, *a kingdom*, that not only can not fall, but *can not be shaken?* Heb. xii. 28. *Oh! be wise, and consider your latter end*, and whatsoever you do, look after this blessed inheritance. Seek to have the right to it in Jesus Christ, and the evidences and seals of it from his Spirit; and if it be so with you, your hearts will be upon it, and your lives will be conformed to it.

**VER. 10. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.**

THE rich bounty of God diffuses itself throughout the world upon all; yet there is a select number who have peculiar blessings of his *right hand*, which the rest of the world share not in; and even as to common blessings, they are differenced by a peculiar title to them, and sweetness in them; their blessings are blessings indeed, and entirely so, outside and inside, and more so within than they appear without; *the Lord* himself *is their portion*, and *they are his*. This is their blessedness, which in a low estate they can challenge, and so outvie all the painted prosperity of the world. Some kind of blessings do abundantly run over upon others; but *the cup of blessings* belongs unto the godly by a new right from heaven, graciously conferred upon them. Others are sent away *with gifts* (as some apply that passage, Gen. xxv. 5, 6), but the inheritance is Isaac's. They are called to be *the sons of God*, and are like him, as his children, in goodness and blessings. The inheritance of blessings is theirs alone:—*Called*, says the apostle, *to inherit a blessing*. And all the promises in the great charter of both testaments run in that appropriating style, entailed to them, as the only heirs. Thus this fitly is translated from the one testament to the other, by the apostle, for his present purpose—*he that will love*, &c. See Psalm xxxiv. 13, 14.

Consider, 1. The qualification required. 2. The blessing annexed and ascertained to it; the scope being, to recommend a rule so exact, and for that purpose, to propound a good so important and desirable, as a sufficient attractive to study and conform to that rule.

The rule is all of it one straight line, running the whole tract of a godly man's life; yet you see clearly that it is not cut asunder indeed, but only marked into four, whereof, the two latter parcels are somewhat longer, more generally reaching a man's ways, the two former particularly regulating the tongue.

In the ten words of the law which God delivered in so singular a manner both by word and writ from his own mouth and hand, there be two, which if not wholly, yet most especially and most expressly concern the tongue, as a very considerable, though a small part of man; and of these four words, here two are bestowed on it.

The Apostle, St. James, is large in this, teaching the great concernment of this point. *It is a little member* (says he, chap. iii. 5), *but boasteth great things*, needs a strong bridle: and the bridling of it makes much for the ruling the whole course of a man's life, as the apostle there applies the resemblance; yea, he gives the skill of this as the very character of perfection. And if we consider it, it must indeed be of very great consequence how we use the tongue, it being the main outlet of the thoughts of the heart and the mean of society among men in all affairs civil and spiritual; by which men give birth to the conceptions of their own minds, and seek to beget the like in the minds of others. The bit that is here made for men's mouths hath these two halves that make it up: 1. To refrain from open evil speaking. 2. From double and guileful speaking.

*From evil.*] This is a large field, the evil of the tongue; but I give it too narrow a name: we have good warrant to give it a much larger—A whole universe, *a world of iniquity*, Jam. iii. 6, a vast bulk of evils, and great variety of them, as of countries on the earth, or creatures in the world; and multitudes of such are venomous and full of deadly poison, and not a few, monsters, new produc-

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tions of wickedness *semper aliquid novi*, as they say of Africa.

There be in the daily discourses of the greatest part of men, many things that belong to this *world of evil*, and yet pass unsuspected, so that we do not think them to be within its compass; not using due diligence and exactness in our discoveries of the several parts of it, although it is all within ourselves, yea, within a small part of ourselves, our tongues.

It were too quick a fancy to think to travel over this world of iniquity, the whole circuit of it, in an hour, yea, or so much as to aim exactly at all the parts that can be taken of it in the smallest map: but some of the chief we would particularly take notice of in the several four parts of it; for it will without constraint hold resemblance in that division, with the other, the habitable world.

I. *Profane* speech, that which is grossly and manifestly wicked; and in that part lie, 1. Impious speeches, which directly reflect upon the glory and name of God; blasphemies, and oaths, and cursings, of which there is so great, so lamentable abundance among us, the whole land overspread and defiled with it, the common noise that meets a man in streets and houses, and almost in all places where he comes; and to these, join what are not uncommon among us neither, scoffs and mocking at religion, the power and strictness of it, not only by the grosser sort, but by pretenders to some kind of goodness; for they who have attained to a self-pleasing pitch of civility or formal religion, have usually that point of presumption with it, that they make their own size the model and rule to examine all by. What is below it, they condemn indeed as profane; but what is beyond it, they account needless and affected preciseness; and, therefore, are as ready as others to let fly invectives or bitter taunts against it, which are the keen and poisoned shafts of the tongue, and a persecution that shall be called to a strict account. 2. Impure or filthy speaking, which either pollutes or offends the hearers, and is the noisome breath of a rotten polluted heart.

II. Consider next, as another grand part of the tongue, *Uncharitable* speeches, tending to the defaming and disgrace of others; and these are likewise of two sorts: 1. Open railing and reproaches; 2. Secret slander and detraction. The former is unjust and cruel, but it is somewhat the less dangerous, because open. It is a fight in plain field; but truly it is no piece of a Christan's warfare to encounter it in the same kind. The sons of peace are not for these tongue-combats; they are often, no doubt, set upon so, but they have another abler way of overcoming it than by the use of the same weapon: for they break and blunt the point of ill-reproaches by meekness, and triumph over cursings with more abundant blessing, as is enjoined in the former words, which are seconded with these out of Psalm xxxiv. 13, 14. But they that enter the lists in this kind, and are provided one for another with enraged minds, are usually not unprovided of weapons, but lay hold on anything that comes next;—*Furor arma ministrat;* as your drunkards in their quarrels, in their cups and pots, if they have any other great reproach, they lay about them with that, as their sword; but if they want that, true or untrue, pertinent or impertinent, all is one, they cast out any revilings that come next to hand. But there is not only wickedness, but something of baseness in this kind of conflicts, that makes them more abound among the baser sort, and not so frequent with such as are but of a more civil breeding and quality than the vulgar.

But the other kind—detraction, is more universal among all sorts, as being a far easier way of mischief in this kind, and of better conveyance. Railings cry out the matter openly, but detraction works all by surprise and stratagem, and mines under ground, and therefore is much more pernicious. The former are as the *arrows that fly by day*, but this, *as the pestilence that walketh in darkness* (as these two are mentioned together in Psalm xci. 5, 6), it spreads and infects secretly and insensibly, is not felt but in the effects of it: and it works either by calumnies altogether forged and untrue, of which malice is inventive, or by the advantage of real faults, of which it is very discerning, and these are stretched and aggravated to the utmost. It is not expressible how deep a wound a tongue sharpened to this work will give, with a very little word and little noise—*as a razor*, as it is called in Psalm lii. 2, which with a small touch cuts very deep—taking things by the worst handle, whereas charity, will try about all ways for a good acceptation and sense of things, and takes all by the best. This pest is still killing some almost in all companies; it *casteth down many wounded*, as it said of the strange woman, Prov. vii. 26. And they convey it under fair prefacing of commendation; so giving them poison in wine, both that it may pass the better, and penetrate the more. This is a great sin, one which the Lord ranks with the first, when he sets them in order against a man, Psalm l. 20: *Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother.*

III. *Vain fruitless* speeches are an evil of the tongue, not only those they call *harmless lies*, which some poor people take a pleasure in, and trade much in, light buffooneries and foolish jesting, but the greatest part of those discourses which men account the *blameless* entertainments one of another, come within the compass of this evil; frothy unsavory stuff, tending to no purpose nor good at all: *effectless words*, ἄργον, as our Savior speaks, Matt. xii. 36, of which we must *render an account in the day of judgment*, for that very reason. They are in this *world of evil*, in the tongue.

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if no other way ill, yet ill they are, as the Arabian deserts and barren sands, because they are fruitless.

IV. *Doubleness and guile:* so great a part, that it is here particularly named a part, though the evil of it is less known and discerned; and so there is in it, as I may say, much *terra incognita;* yet it is of a very large compass, as large, we may confidently say, as all the other three together. What of men's speech is not manifestly evil in any of the other kinds, is the most of it naught this way: speech good to appearance, plausible and fair, but not upright; not silver, but *silver dross*, as Solomon calls it; burning lips, &c. Prov. xxvi. 23. Each almost, some way or other, speaking falsehood and deceit to his neighbor; and daring to act thus falsely with God in his services, and our protestations of obedience to him; religious speeches abused by some in hypocrisy, as holy vestments, for a mask or disguise; doing nothing but *compassing him about with lies*, as he complains of Ephraim, Hos. xi. 12; deceiving indeed ourselves, while we think to deceive him who can not be deceived, and *will not be mocked*, Psalm xvii. 1; Gal. vi. 7. He saw through the disguise and hypocrisy of his own people, when they came to inquire at him, and yet still entertained their heart-idols, as he tells the prophet, Ezek. xiv. 3.

The sins of each of us, would we enter into a strict account of ourselves, would be found to arise to a great sum in this kind; and they that do put themselves upon the work of self-trial, find, no doubt, abundant matter of deepest humbling, though they had no more, even in the sin of their lips, and are by it often astonished at the Lord's patience, considering his holiness; as Isaiah cried out, ch. vi. 5: having seen the Lord in a glorious vision, this in particular falls upon his thoughts concerning himself and the people—*polluted lips: Wo is me*, &c. And indeed it is a thing the godly mind can not be satisfied with, to make mention of the Lord, till their lips be *toucheth with a coal from* the heavenly fire of *the altar;* and they especially that are called to be the Lord's messengers, will say as St. Bernard, "Had the prophet need of a coal to unpollute his lips, then do ministers require *totum globum ignium*, a whole globe of fire." Go through the land, and see if the sins of this kind will not take up much of the bill against us, which the Lord seems now to have taken into his hands and to be reading, and about to take order with it, because we will not. Would we set ourselves to read it, he would let it fall. Is it not because of oaths that the *land mourns*, or I am sure hath now high cause to mourn? Mockings at *the power of godliness* fly thick in most congregations and societies. And what is there to be found almost but mutual detractions and supplantings of the good name of another, *tongues taught to speak lies*, Jer. ix. 4, 5, and that frame, or sew and *weave together deceits*, as it is in Psalm l. 19? And even the godly, as they may be subject to other sins, so may they be under some degree of this; and too many are very much subject, by reason of their unwatchfulness and not staying themselves in this point, though not to profane, yet to vain, and it may be to detractive speeches; sometimes possibly not with malicious intention, but out of an inadvertence of this evil, readier to stick on the failings of men, and it may be of other Christians, than to consider, and commend, and to follow what is laudable in them; and it may be in their best discourses, not endeavoring to have hearts purified, as becomes them, from all guile and self-ends. Oh! it is a thing needs much diligent study, and is worth it all, to be thoroughly sincere and unfeigned in all, and particularly in these things. Our Savior's innocence is expressed so: *In his mouth was found no guile.* (Chapter ii. of this Epistle, verse 22.)

But to add something for remedy of these evils in some part discovered, for to vanquish this world of evils, is a great conquest.

1. It must be done at the heart; otherwise it will be but a mountebank cure, a false imagined conquest. The weights and wheels are *there*, and the clock strikes according to their motion. Even he that speaks contrary to what is within him, guilefully contrary to his inward conviction and knowledge, yet speaks conformably to what is within him in the temper and frame of his heart, which is double, *a heart and a heart*, as the psalmist hath it, Psalm xii. 2. A guileful heart makes guileful tongue and lips. It is the workhouse where is the forge of deceits and slanders, and other evil speakings; and the tongue is only the outer shop where they are vended, and the lips the door of it: so then such ware as is made within, such and no other can be set out. From evil thoughts, evil speakings; from a profane heart, profane words; and from a malicious heart, bitter or calumnious words; and from a deceitful heart, guileful words, well varnished, but lined with rottenness. And so in the general, *from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*, as our Savior teaches, Matt. xii. 34. That which the heart is full of, runs over by the tongue: if the heart be full of God, the tongue will delight to speak of him; much of heavenly things within, will sweetly breathe forth something of their smell by the mouth; and if nothing but earth is there, all that man's discourse will have an earthly smell; and if nothing but wind, vanity, and folly, the speech will be airy, and vain, and purposeless. *The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom: the law of his God is in his heart*, Psalm xxxvii. 30, 31. *Thy law*, says David (Psalm xl. 8), *is within my heart*, or as the Hebrew phrase is, *in the midst of my bowels;* and that, as from the centre, sends forth the lines and rays of suitable words, and *I will not, can not refrain*, as there it is added, verse 9, *I have*

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*preached righteousness: lo, I have not refrained my lips.* So no more can the evil heart *refrain the tongue from evil*, as is here directed. *The tongue of the righteous*, says Solomon, *is as fine silver, but the heart of the wicked is little worth.* Prov. x. 20. It makes the antithesis *in the root;* his *heart* is little worth, and therefore his *tongue* has no silver in it; he may be *worth thousands* (as we speak), that is, indeed, in his chests or lands, and yet himself, his heart, and all the thoughts of it, not worth a penny.

If thou art inured to oaths or cursing, in any kind or fashion of it, taking the great *name of God* any ways *in vain*, do not favor thyself in it as a small offence: to excuse it by custom, is to wash thyself with ink; and to plead that thou art long practised in that sin, is to accuse thyself deeper. If thou wouldst indeed be delivered from it, think not that a slight dislike of it (when reproved) will do; but seek for a due knowledge of the majesty of God, and thence a deep reverence of him in thy heart; and that will certainly cure that habituated evil of thy tongue; will quite alter that bias which the custom thou speakest of hath given it; will cast it in a new mould, and teach it a new language; will turn thy regardless abuse of that name, by vain oaths and asseverations, into a holy frequent use of it in prayers and praises. Thou wilt not then dare dishonor that blessed name, which saints and angels bless and adore; but wilt set in with them to bless it.

None that know the weight of that name will dally with it, and *lightly lift it up* (as that word translated *taking in vain*, in the third commandment, signifies); they that do continue to *lift it up in vain*, as it were, to sport themselves with it, will find the weight of it falling back upon them, and crushing them to pieces.

In like manner, a purified heart will unteach the tongue all filthy impure speeches, and will give it a holy strain; and the spirit of charity and humility will banish that mischievous humor, which sets so deep in the most, of reproaching and disgracing others in any kind, either openly or secretly. For it is wicked self-love and pride of heart whence these do spring, searching and disclosing the failings of others, on which love will rather cast a mantle to hide them.

It is an argument of a candid ingenuous mind, to delight in the good name and commendation of others; to pass by their defects, and take notice of their virtues; and to speak and hear of those willingly, and not endure either to speak or hear of the other; for in this indeed you may be little less guilty than the evil speaker, in taking pleasure in it, though you speak it not. And this is a piece of men's natural perverseness, to drink in tales and calumnies;* and he that doth this, will readily, from the delight he hath in hearing, slide insensibly into the humor of evil speaking. It is strange how most persons dispense with themselves in this point, and that in scarcely any societies shall we find a hatred of this ill, but rather some tokens of taking pleasure in it; and until a Christian sets himself to an inward watchfulness over his heart, not suffering in it any thought that is uncharitable, or vain self-esteem, upon the sight of other's frailties, he will still be subject to somewhat of this, in the tongue or ear at least. So, then, as for the evil of guile in the tongue, a sincere heart, *truth in the inward parts*, powerfully redresses it; therefore it is expressed, Psalm xv. 2, *That speaketh the truth from his heart;* thence it flows. Seek much after this, to speak nothing with God, nor men, but what is the sense of a single unfeigned heart. O sweet truth! excellent but rare sincerity! he that *loves that truth within*, alone can work it there; seek it of him.

*2dly.* Be choice in your society, *Sit not with vain persons*, Psalm xxvi. 4, whose tongues have nothing else to utter, but impurity, or malice, or folly. Men readily learn the dialect and tone of the people among whom they live. If you sit down in the chair of scorners, if you take a seat with them, you shall quickly take a share of their diet with them, and sitting among them, take your turn, in time, of speaking with them in their own language. But frequent the company of grave and godly persons, in whose hearts and lips, piety, and love, and wisdom, are set, and it is the way to learn their language.

*3dly.* Use a little of the bridle in the quantity of speech.* Incline a little rather to sparing than lavishing, for *in many words there wants not sin.* That flux of the tongue, that prattling and babbling disease, is very common; and hence so many impertinences, yea, so many of those worse ills in their discourses, whispering about, and inquiring, and censuring this and that. A childish delight! and yet most men carry it with them all along to speak of persons and things not concerning us.† And this draws men to speak many things which agree not with the rules of wisdom, and charity, and sincerity. *He that refraineth his lips is wise*, saith Solomon, Prov. x. 19: a vessel without a cover can not escape uncleanness. Much might be avoided by a little refraining of this; much of the infection and sin that are occasioned by the many babblings that are usual. And were it no worse, is it not a sufficient evil that they waste away that time, precious time, which can not be recovered, which the most just or most thankful man in the world can not restore? He that spares speech, *favors his tongue* indeed, as the Latin phrase is, [*favere linguæ*]; not he that looses the

* Obtrectatio et livor primis auribus accipiuntur.

* χωρὶς τὸ τ' εἰπεῖν πολλὰ καὶ τὰ καίρια. ÆSCHYL.

† Οὐδὲν οὕτως ἡδὺ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ὡς τὸ λαλεῖν τὰ ἀλλοτρία. 2 ORAT. I.

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*reins* and lets it run. He that refrains his lips, may ponder and pre-examine what he utters, whether it be profitable and reasonable or no; and so the tongue of the just is as *fined silver*, Prov. x. 20; it is refined in the wise forethought and pondering of the heart: according to the saying, *Bis ad limam priusquam semel ad linguam. Twice to the file ere once to the tongue.* Even to utter knowledge and wise things profusely, holds not of wisdom, and a little usually makes most noise; as the Hebrew proverb is, *Stater in lagena bis bis clamat. A penny in an earthen pot keeps a great sound and tinkling.* Certainly it is the way to have much inward peace, to be wary in this point. Men think to have solace by much free unbounded discourse with others, and when they have done they find it otherwise, and sometimes contrary. He is wise that hath learned to speak little with others, and much with himself and with God. How much might be gained for our souls, if we would make a right use of this silence! So David, dumb to men, found his tongue to God, Psal. xxxviii. 13, 15. A spiritually-minded man is quickly weary of other discourse, but of that which he loves and wherewith his affection is possessed and taken up; *Grave æstimant quicquid illud non sonat quod intus amant.* And by experience, a Christian will find it, when the Lord is pleased to show him most favor in prayer or other spiritual exercise, how unsavory it makes other discourses after it; as they who have tasted something singularly sweet, think other things that are less sweet, altogether tasteless and unpleasant.

4*thly*. In the use of the tongue, when thou dost speak, divert it from evil and guile, by a habit of, and delight in, profitable and gracious discourse. Thus St. Paul makes the opposition, Eph, iv. 29. Let there be no *rotten communication* (σαπρὸς λογὸς), and yet he urges not total silence neither, but enjoins such speech *as may edify and administer grace to the hearers.* Now in this we should consider, to the end such discourses may be more fruitful, both what is the true end of them, and the right means suiting it. They are not only, nor principally, for the learning of some new things, or the canvassing of debated questions, but their chief good is the warming of the heart; stirring up in it love to God, and remembrance of our present and after estate, our mortality and immortality; and extolling the ways of holiness, and the promises and comforts of the gospel, and the excellency of Jesus Christ; and in these, sometimes one particular, sometimes another, as our particular condition requires, or any occasion makes them pertinent. Therefore in these discourses, seek not so much either to vent thy knowledge, or to increase it, as to know more spiritually and effectually what thou dost know. And in this way those mean despised truths, that every one thinks he is sufficiently seen in, will have a new sweetness and use in them, which thou didst not so well perceive before (for these flowers can not be sucked dry), and in this humble, sincere way, thou shalt *grow in grace and in knowledge* too.

There is no sweeter entertainment than for travellers to be remembering their country, their blessed home, and the happiness abiding them there, and to be refreshing and encouraging one another in the hopes of it; strengthening their hearts against all the hard encounters and difficulties in the way: often overlooking this moment, and helping each other to higher apprehensions of that vision of God which we expect.

And are not such discourses much more worthy the choosing, than the base trash we usually fill one another's ears withal? Were our tongues given us to exchange folly and sin? or were they not framed for the glorifying of God, and therefore are called *our glory?* Some take the expression for the soul; but they must be one in this work, and then, indeed, are both our tongues and our souls truly our glory, when they are busied in exalting his, and are tuned together to that. *That my glory may sing praise to thee and not be silent.* Psalm xxx. 12. Instead of calumnies, and lies, and vanities, the carrion which flies—base minds feed on, to delight in divine things and extolling of God, is for a *man to eat angels' food.* An excellent task for the tongue is that which David chooseth, Psalm xxxv. 28: *And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness, and of thy praise all the day long.* Were the day ten days long, no vacant room for any unholy, or offensive, or feigned speech! And they lose not who love to speak praise to him, for he loves to speak peace to them! and instead of the world's vain tongue-liberty, to have such intercourse and discourse, is no sad melancholy life, as the world mistakes it.

VER. 11. Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

THIS is a full and complete rule; but it is our miserable folly to mistake so far as to embrace evil under the notion of good; and not only contrary to the nature of the thing, but contrary to our own experience, still to be pursuing that which is still flying further off from us, catching at a vanishing shadow of delight, with nothing to fasten upon but real guiltiness and misery. Childish minds! we have been so often gulled, and yet never grow wiser, still bewitched and deluded with dreams: *a deceived heart* (a mocked or deluded heart) *hath turned him aside.* Isa. xliv. 20. When we think that we are surest, have that hand that holds fastest, our right hand, upon some good, and that now surely we are sped—even then it proves *a lie in our right hand*, slips through as a handful of air and proves nothing; promises fair, but doth mock us (as the same word is used by Jacob, Gen. xxxi. 7, expressing the unfaithfulness of his

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uncle who changed his ways so often); yet still we foolishly and madly trust it! When it makes so gross a lie, that we might easily, if we took it to the light, see through it, being a lie so often discovered, and of known falsehood, yet, some new dream or disguise makes it pass with us again, and we go round in that mill, having our eyes put out, like Samson, and still we are where we were, engaged in perpetual fruitless toil. Strange! that the base deceitful lusts of sin should still keep their credit with us! but *the beast hath a false prophet* at his side, Rev. xix. 20, to commend him and set him off with new inventions, and *causes us to err by his lies*, as it is said of the false prophets, Jer. xxiii. 32. But evil it is still; not only void of all good, but the very deformity and debasement of the soul; defacing in it the divine image of its Maker, and impressing on it the vile image of Satan. And, then, further, it is attended with shame and sorrow: even at the very best, *it is a sowing of the wind*—there is no solid good in it—and withal a *reaping of the whirlwind*, vexations and horrors. Hos. viii. 7. They that know it under a sense of this afterview, as attended with the wrath of an offended God—ask them what they think of it; whether they would not, in those thoughts. choose any trouble or pain, though ever so great, rather than willingly to adventure on the ways of sin.

Obedience is that good, that beauty and comeliness of the soul, that conformity with the holy will of God, that hath peace and sweetness in it; the hardest exercise of it is truly delightful even at present, and hereafter it shall fully be so. Would we but learn to consider it thus, to know sin to be the greatest evil, and the holy will of God the highest good, it would be easy to persuade and prevail with men to comply with this advice, to *eschew* the one, and *do* the other.

These do not only reach the actions, but require an intrinsical aversion of the heart from sin, and a propension to holiness and the love of it.

*Eschew.*] The very motion and bias of the soul must be turned from sin, and carried toward God. And this is principally to be considered by us, and inquired after within us—*an abhorrence of that which is evil*, as the Scripture speaks, Rom. xii. 9; not a simple forbearing, but hating and loathing it, and this springing from the love of God. *Ye that love the Lord, hate evil*, says the Psalmist, xcvii. 10. You will do so, can not choose but do so; and so may you know that love to him to be upright and true.

And where this love is, the avoidance of sin, and walking in holiness, or *doing good*, will be, 1. More constant, not wavering with the variation of outward circumstances, of occasion, or society, or secrecy, but going on in its natural course; as the sun is as far from the earth, and goes as fast, under a cloud, as when it is in our sight, and goes cheerfully, because from a natural principle it *rejoiceth as a strong man to run*, Psalm xiv. 5; such is the obedience of a renewed mind. And, 2. More universal, as proceeding from an abhorrence of all sin; as natural antipathies are against the whole kind of any thing. 3. More exact, keeping afar off from the very appearances of sin, and from all the inducements and steps toward it. And this is the true way of *eschewing* it.

Not a little time of constrained forbearance during a night, or the day of participating of the communion, or a little time before, and some few days after such services; for thus, with the most, sin is not dispossessed and cast out, but retires inward and lurks in the heart. Being beset with those ordinances, it knows they last but awhile, and therefore it gets into its strength, and keeps close there, till they be out of sight and disappear again, and be a good way off, so that it thinks itself out of their danger, a good many days having passed, and then it comes forth and returns to exert itself with liberty, yea, it may be with more vigor, as it were to regain the time it hath been forced to lose and lie idle in.

They again miss of the right manner of this eschewing, who think themselves, possibly, somebody in it, in that they do avoid the gross sins wherein the vulgar sort of sinners wallow, or do eschew such evils as they have little or no inclination of nature to. But where the heart stands against sin, as a breach of God's law and an offence against his majesty, as Joseph, *Shall I do this evil, and sin against God?* Gen. xxxix. 9, there, it will carry a man against all kind of sin, the most refined and the most beloved sin, wherein the truth of this aversion is most tried and approved. As they who have as strong natural dislike of some kind of meat, dress it as you will, and mingle it with what they love best, yet they will not willingly eat of it; and if they be surprised and deceived some way to swallow some of it, yet they will discover it afterward, and be restless till they have vomited it up again; thus is it with the heart which hath that inward contrariety to sin wrought in it by a new nature—it will consent to no reconcilement with it, nor with any kind of it; as in those deadly feuds which were against whole families and names without exception. The renewed soul will *have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness*, as the apostle speaks, Eph. v. 11. For *what agreement is there betwixt light and darkness?* 2 Cor. vi. 14. And this hatred of sin works most against sin in a man's self; as in things we abhor, our reluctance rises most when they are nearest us. A godly man hates sin in others, as hateful wheresoever it is found; but because it is nearest him in himself, he hates it most there. They who by their nature and breeding are somewhat delicate, like not to see anything uncleanly anywhere, but least of all in their own house, and upon

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their own clothes or skin. This makes the godly man, indeed, flee not only the society of evil men, but from himself; he goes out of his old self; and till this be done, a man does not indeed flee sin, but carries it still with him as an evil companion, or an evil guide rather, that misleads him still from the paths of life. And there is much, first in the true discovery, and then in the thorough disunion of the heart from that sin which is most of all a man's self, that from which he can with the greatest difficulty escape, *that besets him the most*, ευπεριστατος, Heb. xii. 1, and lieth in his way on all hands, hath him at every turn: to disengage one's self and get free from that, to eschew that evil, is difficult indeed. And the task in this is the harder, if this evil be, as oftentimes it may be, not some gross sin, but one more subtle, less seen, and therefore not so easily avoided; but for this an impartial search must be used: if it be among those things that seem most necessary, and that can not be dispensed with, an idol hid among the stuff, yet thence must it be drawn forth and cast out.

The right eschewing of evil, involves a wary avoidance of all occasions and beginnings of it. *Flee from sin* (says the wise man) *as from a serpent*. Eccles. ii. 2. We are not to be tampering with it, and coming near it, and thinking to charm it: "For," as one says, "who will not laugh at the charmer that is bitten by a serpent?" He that thinks he hath power and skill to handle it without danger, let him observe Solomon's advice concerning the strange woman: he says not only, *Go not into her house*, but, *remove thy way far from her, and come not near the door of her house*. Prov. v. 8. So teaches he wisely for the avoiding of that other sin near to it, *Look not on the wine when it is red in the cup*. Prov. xxiii. 31. They that are bold and adventurous, are often wounded: thus, *he that removeth stones shall be hurt thereby*. Eccles. x. 9. If we know our own weakness and the strength of sin, we shall fear to expose ourselves to hazards, and be willing even to abridge ourselves of some things lawful when they prove dangerous; for he that will do always all he lawfully may, shall often do something that lawfully he may not.

Thus for the other [*do good*], the main thing is, to be inwardly principled for it; to have a heart stamped with the love of God and his commandments; to do all for conscience of his will, and love to him, and desire of his glory. A good action, even the best kind of actions, in an evil hand, and from an evil unsanctified heart, passes among evil. *Delight in the Lord* and in his ways. David's *Oh! how love I thy law*, Psalm cxix. 17, tells that he esteems it above the richest and pleasantest things on earth, but how much he esteems and loves it he can not express.

And upon this will follow (as observed in regard to eschewing evil) a constant track and course of obedience, moving directly contrary to the stream of wickedness about a man, and also against the bent of his own corrupt heart within him; a serious desire and endeavor to do all the good that is within our calling and reach, but especially that particular good of our calling, that which *is in our hand*, and is peculiarly required of us. For in this some deceive themselves; they look upon such a condition as they imagine were fit for them, or such as is in their eye when they look upon others, and they think if they were such persons, and had such a place, and such power and opportunities, they would do great matters, and in the meantime they neglect that good to which they are called, and which they have in some measure power and place to do. This is the roving sickly humor of our minds, and speaks their weakness; as sick persons would still change their bed, or posture, or place of abode, thinking to be better. But a staid mind applies itself to the duties of *its own station*, and seeks to glorify him who set it there, reverencing his wisdom in disposing of it so. And there is certainty of a blessed approbation of this conduct. Be thy station never so low, it is not the high condition, but much fidelity, secures it: *Thou hast been faithful in little*. Luke xix. 17. We must care not only to answer occasions, when they call, but to catch at them, and seek them out; yea, to frame occasions of doing good, whether in the Lord's immediate service, delighting in that, private and public, or in doing good to men, in assisting one with our means, another with *our admonitions, another* with counsel or comfort as we can; laboring not only *to have something* of that good which is most contrary to our nature, but even *to be eminent in that*, setting Christian resolution, and both the example and strength of our Lord against all oppositions, and difficulties, and discouragements: *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith*. Heb. xii. 2.

We see, then, our rule, and it is the rule of peace and happiness; what hinders but we apply our hearts to it? This is our work, and setting aside the advantage that follows, consider the thing in itself: 1. The opposition of sin and obedience, under the name of *evil* and *good*; 2. The composition of our rule in these expressions, *eschew* and *do*. Consider it thus—*evil* and *good*, and it will persuade us to *eschew* and *do*. And if you are persuaded to it, then, 1. Desire light from above, to discover to you what is evil and offensive to God in any kind, and what pleaseth him, what is his will (for that is the rule and reason of good in our actions, *that ye may prove what is the good, and holy, and acceptable will of God*, Rom. xii. 2); and to discover in yourselves what is most adverse and repugnant to that will. 2. Seek a renewed mind to hate that evil, even such as is the closest and most connatural to you,



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and to love that good, even that which is most contrary. 3. Seek strength and skill, that by another Spirit than your own, you may *avoid evil and do good*, and resist the incursions and solicitings of evil, the artifices and violences of Satan, who is both a *serpent* and a *lion;* and seek for power against your own inward corruption, and the fallacies of your own heart. And thus you shall be able for *every good work*, and be kept, in such a measure as suits your present estate, *blameless in spirit, soul, and body, to the coming of Jesus Christ.* 1 Thess. v. 23.

"Oh!" but says the humble Christian, "I am often entangled and plunged in soul-evils, and often frustrated in my thoughts against these evils, and in my aims at the good, which is my task and duty."

And was not this Paul's condition? May you not complain in his language? And happy will you be, if you do so with some measure of his feeling; happy in crying out of *wretchedness!* Was not this his malady, *When I would do good, evil is present with me?* Rom. vii. 21. But know at once, that though thy duty is this, *to eschew evil and do good*, yet thy salvation is more surely founded than on thine own good. That perfection which answers to justice and the law, is not required of thee. Thou art to *walk, not after the flesh, but after the spirit;* but in so walking, whether in a low or a high measure, still thy comfort lieth in this, that *there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus*, as the apostle begins the next chapter (Rom. viii.) after his sad complaints. Again, consider his thoughts in the close of the viith chapter, on perceiving the work of God in himself, and distinguishing that from the corrupt motions of nature, and so finding at once matter of heavy complaint, and yet of cheerful exultation: *O! wretched man that I am;* and yet with the same breath, *thanks to God, through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

So then, mourn with him, and yet rejoice with him, and go on with courage as he did, still *fighting the good fight of faith.* When thou fallest in the mire, be ashamed and humbled, yet return and wash in *the fountain opened*, and return and beg new strength *to walk more surely.* Learn to trust thyself less, and God more, and up and be doing against thy enemies, how tall and mighty soever be the sons of Anak. *Be of good courage*, and the Lord shall be with thee, and *shall strengthen thy heart*, and establish thy goings.

Do not lie down to rest upon lazy conclusions, that it is well enough with thee, because thou art out of the common puddle of profaneness; but look further, to *cleanse thyself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* 2 Cor. vii. 1. Do not think thy little is enough, or that thou hast reason to despair of attaining more, but press, *press hard toward the mark and prize of thy high calling.* Phil. iii. 14. Do not think all is lost, because thou art at present foiled. *Novit se sæpe vicisse post sanguinem*, says Seneca: The experienced soldier knows that he hath often won the day after a fall, or a wound received; and be assured that after the short combats of a moment, follows an eternity of triumph.

*Let him seek peace and ensue it.*] Omitting the many acceptations of the word *peace*, here particularly external peace with men, I conceive is meant; and this is to be sought, and not only to be sought when it is willingly found, but we are to pursue and follow it when it seems to fly away; but yet, so to pursue it, as never to step out of the way of holiness and righteousness after it, and to forsake this rule that goes before it, of *eschewing evil and doing good.* Yea, mainly in so doing is peace to be sought and pursued, and it is most readily to be found and overtaken in that way: for *the fruit of righteousness is peace.* James iii. 18.

1st, Consider that an unpeaceable, turbulent disposition is the badge of a wicked mind; *as the raging sea, still casting up mire and dirt.* Isa. lvii. 20. But this love of peace, and in all good ways seeking and pursuing it, is the true character *of the children of God*, who is *the God of peace.* True, the ungodly (to prevent their own just challenge, as Ahab) call the friends of true religion, disturbers, and the *troublers of Israel*, 1 Kings xviii. 17; and this will still be their impudence: but certainly, they *that love the welfare of Jerusalem, do seek, and pray for*, and work for *peace* all they can, as a chief blessing, and the fruitful womb of multitudes of blessings.

2dly, Consider, then, that to be deprived of peace, is a heavy judgment, and calls for our prayers and tears to pursue it and entreat its return; calls us to seek it from His hand who is the sovereign dispenser of peace and war, to seek to *be at peace with him, and thereby good, all good shall come unto us* (Job xxii. 21), and particularly this great good of outward peace in due time; and the very judgment of war shall in the event be turned into a blessing. We may pursue it among men, and not overtake it; we may use all good means, and fall short; but pursue it up as far as the throne of grace, seek it by prayer, and that will overtake it, will be sure to find it in God's hand, *who stilleth the waves of the sea, and the tumults of the people. If he give quietness, who then can disturb?* Psalm. lxv. 7; Job xxxiv. 29.

*He that will love life.*] This is the attractive,—*life. Long life and days of good*, is the thing men most desire; for if they be evil days, then so much the worse that they be long, and the shortest of such seem too long: and if short, being good, this cuts off the enjoyment of that good: but these two complete the good, and suit it to men's wishes, —length and prosperity of life.

It is here supposed that all would be happy, that all desire it, being carried to that by nature, to seek their own good; but he that *will*

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*love it*, that means here, that will wisely love it, that will take the way to it, and be true to his desire, *must refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; he must eschew evil and do good, seek peace and ensue it.* You desire to see good days, and yet hinder them by sinful provocations; you desire good clear days, and yet cloud them by your guiltiness.

Thus many desire good here, yea, and confusedly desire the good of the life to come, because they hear it is life, and long life, and that good is to be found in it, yea, nothing but good: but in this is our folly, we will not love it wisely. The face of our desire is toward it, but in our course we are rowing from it down into the dead sea. You would all have better times, peace and plenty, and freedom from the molestation and expense of our present condition: why will you not be persuaded to seek it in the true way of it?

But how is this? Do not the righteous often pass their days in distress and sorrow, so as to have *few and evil days*, as Jacob speaks, Gen. xlix. 7? Yet is there a truth in this promise, annexing outward good things to godliness, *as having the promises of this life, and that which is to come.* 1 Tim. iv. 8. And it is so accomplished to them, when the Lord sees it convenient and conductive to their highest good: but that he most aims at, and they themselves do most desire; and therefore, if the abatement of outward good, either as to the length or sweetness of this life, serve his main end and theirs better, they are agreed upon this gainful commutation of good for infinitely better.

The life of a godly man, though short in comparison of the utmost of nature's course, yet may be long in value, in respect of his activity and attainment to much spiritual good. He may be said to live much in a little time; whereas they that wear out their days in folly and sin, *diu vivunt sed parum, i. e.*, they live long, but little; or, as the same writer again speaks, *non diu vixit, diu fuit, i, e.*, he lived not long, but existed long. And the good of the godly man's days, though unseen good, surpasses all the world's mirth and prosperity, which makes a noise, but is hollow within, as the *crackling of thorns*, a great sound, but little heat, and quickly done. As St. Augustine says of Abraham, he had *dies bonos in Deo, licet malos in seculo*, good days in God, though evil days in his generation; a believer can make up an ill day with a good God, and enjoying him, he hath solid peace. But then that which is abiding, that length of days, and that dwelling in the house of God in that length of days, is what *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard*, &c. 1 Cor. ii. 9. They are, indeed, *good days*, or rather one everlasting day, which has *no need of the sun, nor of the moon*, but immediately flows from the first and increated Light, *the Father of Lights*; His glory shines in it, *and the Lamb is the Light thereof.*

VER. 12. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

THE wisest knowledge of things is, to know them in their causes; but there is no knowledge of causes so happy and useful, as clearly to know and firmly to believe the universal dependance of all things upon the first and highest cause, the cause of causes, the spring of being and goodness, the wise and just Ruler of the world.

This the Psalmist, Psalm xxxiv. 15, 16, as here with him the apostle, give us the true reason of that truth they have averred in the former words, the connexion of holiness and happiness. If life, and peace, and all good be in God's hand to bestow when it pleaseth him, then surely the way to it is an obedient and regular walking in observance of his will; and the way of sin is the way to ruin: *For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, &c., and his face is against them that do evil.*

In the words there is a double opposition; of persons, and of their portion.

1*st*, Of persons, The *righteous* and *evil-doers*. These two words are often used in the Scriptures, and particularly in the book of Psalms, to express the godly and the wicked; and so this righteousness is not absolute perfection or sinlessness, nor is the opposed evil every act of sin or breach of God's law: but the righteous be they that are students of obedience and holiness, that desire to walk as in the sight of God, and to *walk with God*, as Enoch did; that are glad when they can any way serve him, and grieved when they offend him; that feel and bewail their unrighteousness, and are earnestly breathing and advancing forward; have a sincere and unfeigned love to all the commandments of God, and diligently endeavor to observe them; that vehemently hate what most pleases their corrupt nature, and love the command that crosses it most; this is an imperfect kind of perfection. See Phil. iii. 12, 15.

On the other side, evil-doers are they that commit sin *with greediness*; that walk in it, make it their way; that live in sin as their element, *taking pleasure in unrighteousness*, as the apostle speaks, 2 Thessalonians xi. 12; their great faculty, their great delight lies in sin; they are skilful and cheerful evil-doers. Not any one man in all kinds of sins: that is impossible; there is a concatenation of sin, and one disposes and induces to another; but yet one ungodly man is commonly more versed in and delighted with some one kind of sin, another with some other. He forbears none because it is evil and hateful to God, but as he can not travel over the whole globe of wickedness, and go the full circuit, he walks up and down in his accustomed way of sin. No one mechanic is good at all trades, nor is any man expert in all arts; but he is an evil-doer that follows the particular trade of the sin he hath chosen, is active and dili-

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gent in that, and finds it sweet. In a word, this opposition lieth mainly in the bent of the affection, or in the way it is set. The godly man hates the evil he possibly by temptation hath been drawn to do, and loves the good he is frustrated of, and, having intended, hath not attained to do. The sinner who hath his denomination from sin as his course, hates the good which he is sometimes forced to do, and loves that sin which many times he does not, either wanting occasion and means, so that he can not do it, or through the check of an enlightened conscience, possibly dares not do; and though so bound up from the act, as a dog in a chain, yet the habit, the natural inclination and desire in him, is still the same, the strength of his affection is carried to sin. So in the weakest godly man, there is that predominant sincerity and desire of holy walking, according to which he is called a righteous person, the Lord is pleased to give him that name, and account him so, being upright in heart, though often failing. There is a righteousness of higher strain, upon which his salvation hangs; that is not in him, but upon him; he is clothed with it: but this other kind, which consists of sincerity, and of true and hearty, though imperfect obedience, is the righteousness here meant, and opposed to evil-doing.

*2dly*, Their opposite condition, or portion, is expressed in the highest notion of it, that wherein the very being of happiness and misery lieth, the favor and anger of God. As their natures differ most by the habit of their affection toward God, as their main distinguishing character, so the difference of their estate consists in the point of his affection toward them, expressed here, in our language, by the divers aspects of his countenance; because our love or hatred usually looks out, and shows itself that way.

Now for the other word expressing his favor to the righteous, by *the openness of his ear*—the opposition in the other needed not be expressed; for either the wicked pray not, or if they do, it is indeed no prayer, the Lord doth not account or receive it as such; and if his face be set against them, certainly his ear is shut against them too, and so shut that it openeth not to their loudest prayer. *Though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them*, says the Lord, Ezek. viii. 18.

And before we pass to the particulars of their condition, as here we have them described, this we would consider a little, and apply it to our present business—Who are the persons whom the Lord thus regards, and to whose prayer he opens his ear.

This we pretend to be seeking after, that the Lord would look favorably upon us, and hearken to our suits, for ourselves, and this land, and the whole church of God within these kingdoms, Indeed *the fervent prayer of a faithful man availeth much* [πολὺ ἰσχύει]; it is of great strength, a mighty thing, that can bind and loose the influences of heaven (as there is instanced, James v. 16); and if the prayer of a righteous man, be it but of one righteous man, how much more the combined cries of many of them together! And that we judge not the righteousness there and here mentioned to be a thing above human estate, Elias, says the apostle, *was a man*, and *a man subject to like passions as we are*, and yet such a righteous person as the Lord had an eye and gave ear to in so great a manner. But where are those righteous fasters and prayers in great congregations? How few, if any, are to be found, who are such but in the lowest sense and measure, real lovers and inquirers after holiness! What are our meetings here, but assemblies of evil-doers, rebellious children, ignorant and profane persons, or dead, formal professors; and so, the more of us, the worse, incensing the Lord the more; and the multitude of prayers, though we could and would continue many days, all to no purpose from such as we. *Though ye make many prayers, when ye multiply prayer, I will not hear; and when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you.* Isa. i. 11. Your hands are so filthy, that if you would follow me to lay hold of me with them, you drive me further off; as one with foul hands following a person that is neat, to catch hold of him; and *if you spread them out before me*, my eyes are pure, you will make me turn away; I can not endure to look upon them, *I will hide mine eyes from you.* And fasting, added with prayer, will not do it, nor make it pass. *When they fast, I will not hear their cry.* Jer. xiv. 12.

It is the sin of his people that provokes him, instead of looking favorably upon them to have *his eyes upon them for evil and not for good*, as he threatens, Amos ix. 4; and therefore, without putting away of that, prayer is lost breath, doth no good.

They that still retain their sins, and will not hearken to his voice, how can they expect but that justly-threatened retaliation, Prov. i. 26, 28, and that the Lord, in holy scorn in the day of their distress, should send them for help and comfort to those things which they have made their gods, and preferred before him in their trouble? *They will say, arise and save us; but where are the gods that thou hast made thee? Let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble.* Jer. ii. 28.

And not only do open and gross impieties thus disappoint our prayers, but the lodging of any sin in our affection. *If I regard iniquity in my heart*, says the psalmist (Psalm lxvi. 18), *the Lord will not hear my voice.* The word is, *If I see iniquity;* if mine eye look pleasantly upon it, his will not look so upon me, nor shall I find his ear so ready and open. He says not, If I do sin, but, *If I regard it in my heart.* The heart's entertaining and embracing a sin, though it be a smaller

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sin, is more than the simple falling into sin. And as the ungodly do for this reason lose all their prayers, a godly man may suffer this way, in some degree, upon some degree of guiltiness. The heart being seduced, it may be, and entangled for a time by some sinful lust, Christians are sure to find a stop in their prayers, that they neither go nor come so quickly and so comfortably as before. Any sinful humor, as rheums do our voice, binds up the voice of prayer, makes it not so clear clear and shrill as it was wont; and the accusing guilt of it ascending, shuts up the Lord's ear, that he doth not so readily hear and answer as before. And thus that sweet correspondence is interrupted, which all the delights of the world can not compensate. If then, you would have easy and sweet accesses to God in prayer,

1. Seek a holy heart; entertain a constant care and study of holiness; admit no parley with sin; do not so much as hearken to it, if you would be readily heard.

2. Seek a broken heart; the Lord is ever at hand to that, as it is in Psalm xxxiv., whence the apostle cites the words now under our consideration, *He is nigh to them that are of a contrite spirit*,, v. 18, &c.; it is an excellent way to prevail. The breaking of the heart multiplies petitioners; every piece of it hath a voice, and a very strong and very moving voice, that enters his ear, and stirs the bowels and compassions of the Lord toward it.

3. Seek an humble heart. That may present its suit always; the court is constantly there, even within it: the Great King loves to make his abode and residence in it. Isa. lvii. 15. This is the thing that the Lord so delights in and requires; he will not fail to accept of it; it is his choice, Mic. vi. 7, 8, *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?* &c. *He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and love mercy?* There is this righteousness, and that as a great part making it up, *to walk humbly with thy God;* in the original, *humble to walk with thy God;* he can not agree with a proud heart; he hates, resists it; and *two can not walk together unless they be agreed*, as the prophet speaks, Amos iii. 3. The humble heart only is company for God, has liberty to walk and converse with him. *He gives grace to the humble;* he bows his ear, if thou lift not up thy neck: proud beggars he turns away with disdain, and the humblest suiters always speed best with him. *The righteous*, not such in their own eyes, but in his, through his gracious dignation and acceptance. And is there not reason to come humbly before him —base worms, to the most holy and most high God?

*The eyes of the Lord.*] We see, 1. That both are *in his sight*, the righteous and the wicked; all of them, and all their ways. His eye is on the one, and his face on the other, as the word is; but so on these as to be against them. It is therefore rendered as denoting his eye of knowledge and observance, marking them and their actions, which is equally upon both. *There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves*, Job xxxiv. 22. Foolishly and wretchedly done, to do that, or think that, which we would hide from the Lord, and then to think that we can hide it! The prophet speaks wo to such: *Wo to them that dig deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us, and who knoweth us?* Isa. xxix. 15. And this is the grand principle of all wickedness (not, it may be, expressly stated, but secretly lying in the soul), an habitual forgetting of God and his eye, not considering that he beholds us. *Ye that forget God*, says the psalmist (l. 22); thence all impiety proceeds; and, on the other side, *the remembrance* of his eye, is a radical point of piety and holiness, in which the cxxxixth Psalm is large and excellent.

But, 2, as the Lord doth thus equally see both, so that his eye and countenance import his mind concerning them and toward them, the manner of his beholding them is different, yea contrary. And from the other—the beholding them in common—knowing their ways—arises this different beholding, which (as usually words of sense signify also the affection, *verba sensus connotant affectus*) is the approving and disliking, the loving and hating them, and their ways: so he peculiarly *knows the righteous* and their *ways*, Psalm i. 6, and *knows not, never knew, the workers of iniquity;* even those that by their profession would plead most acquaintance, and familiar converse, *eating and drinking in his presence*, and yet *I know you not, whence you are.* Luke viii. 26. It is not a breaking off from former acquaintance; no, he doth not that; he disavows none that ever were truly acquainted with him. So the other evangelist hath it, Matt. vii. 29; of those that thought to have been in no small account, *I never knew you, depart from me;* and the convincing reason lies in that, *Ye workers of iniquity:* none of his favorites and friends are such.

Thus here, his eye, his gracious eye for good, is on the righteous; and his face, his angry looks, his just wrath, against evil-doers.

In the xith Psalm we have this expressed after the same way. First, what we spoke of God's knowing and beholding in common the righteous and wicked, and their ways, is represented by his *sitting on high*, where he may mark, and see clearly throughout all places and all hearts. *His throne is in heaven, his eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men*, ver. 4. He sits in heaven, not as in a chair of rest, regardless of human things, but on *a throne* for governing and judging; though with as little uneasiness and disturbance, as if there were nothing to be done

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that way. *His eyes behold,* not in a fruitless contemplation or knowledge, but *his eyelids* try, which signifies an intent inspection, such as men usually make with a kind of motion of their eyelids. Then upon this is added the different portion of the righteous and wicked, in his beholding them and dealing with them: *The Lord trieth the righteous,* ver. 5, approves what is good in them, and by trial and affliction doth purge out what is evil; and in both these there is love; *but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth;* and therefore, as here, *His face is against them.* His soul and face are all one, but these things are expressed after our manner. He looks upon them with indignation; and thence come the storms in the next verse, *Snares rained down,* ver. 6; the wariest foot can not avoid such snares, they come down upon them from above: *Fire and brimstone and burning tempest* (alluding to *Sodom's* judgment, as an emblem of the punishment of all the wicked); *this is the portion of their cup.* There is a cup for them; but his children drink not with them. *They* have another cup, *the Lord* himself *is the portion of their cup.* Psalm xvi. 5. As the xith Psalm closes, *The righteous Lord loveth righteousness: his countenance doth behold the upright:* that is another beholding than the former, a gracious, loving beholding: as here, *His eyes are upon the righteous.*

Now the persuasion of this truth is the main establishment of a godly mind, amid all the present confusions that appear in things; and it is so here intended, as well as in the Psalm I have mentioned, and throughout the Scriptures.

To look upon the present flourishing and prosperity of evil-doers, and on the distresses and sorrows of the godly, is a dark obscure matter in itself; but the way to be cleared and comforted, is, to look above them to the Lord. *They looked unto him and were lightened.* Psalm xxxiv. 5. That answers all doubts, to believe this undoubted providence and justice, the eye of God that sees all, yea, rules all these things. And in the midst of all, the painted happiness of wicked men, this is enough to make them miserable, *The Lord's face is against them:* and they shall surely find it so. He hath wrath and judgment in store, and *will bring it forth to light,* will execute it in due time; he is preparing for them that cup spoken of, and they shall drink it. So, in the saddest condition of his church and a believing soul, to know this, that the Lord's eye is even then upon them, and that he is upon thoughts of peace and love to them, is that which settles and composes the mind. Thus, in that Psalm before cited, it was such difficulties that did drive David's thoughts to that for satisfaction; *If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?* Psalm xi. 2. In the time of such great shakings and confusions, the righteous man can do nothing to it, but the righteous Lord can do enough; he can do all, *The righteous Lord that loveth righteousness.* While all seems to go upside down, *He is on his throne,* he is *trying and judging,* and will appear to be judge. This is the thing that faithful souls should learn to look to, and not lose view and firm belief of, and should desire the Lord himself to raise their minds to it, when they are ready to sink. Natural strength and resolution will not serve the turn; floods may come that will arise above that; something above a man's own spirit must support him: therefore say with David, Psalm lxi. 2, *When my spirit is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I.* They think sometimes it is so hard with them, that he regards not; but he assures them to the contrary, *I have graven thee upon the palms of mine hands,* Isa. xlix. 16. I can not look upon my own hands, but I must remember thee: *And thy walls are continually before me.* This is what the spouse seeks for, *Set me as a seal upon thine arm.* Cant. viii. 6.

Now a little more particularly to consider the expressions, and their scope here; how is that made good which the former words teach, that they who walk in the ways of wickedness can expect no good, but are certainly miserable? Thus: *The face of the Lord is against them.* Prosper they may in their affairs and estates, may have riches, and posterity, and friends, and the world caressing them and smiling on them on all hands; but there is that one thing that damps all, *the face of the Lord is against them.* This they feel not indeed for the time; it is an invisible ill, out of sight and out of mind with them; but there is a time of the appearing of *this face of the Lord against them, the revelation of his righteous judgment,* as the apostle speaks, Romans ii. 5. Sometimes they have precursory days of it here; there is, however, one great prefixed day, *a day of darkness* to them indeed, wherein they shall know what this is, that now sounds so light, *to have the face of the Lord against them.* A look of it is more terrible than all present miseries combined together; what then shall the eternity of it be? *to be punished* (as the apostle speaks) *with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power!* 2 Thess. i. 9.

Are we not then impertinent foolish creatures, who are so thoughtful how our poor business here succeed with us, and how we are accounted of in the world, and how the faces of men are toward us, and scarcely ever enter into a secret serious inquiry how the countenance of God is to us, whether favorably shining on us, or still angrily *set against us,* as it is against all impenitent sinners?

The face of the soul being toward God turned away from the world and sin, argues for it, that his face is not against it, but that he hath graciously looked upon it, and by a look of love hath drawn it toward himself;

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for we act not first in that. *Non amatur Deus nisi de Deo:* There is no love of God but what comes from God. It is he that prevents us, and by the beams of his love kindles love in our hearts. Now the soul that is thus set toward him, it may be, doth not constantly see here his face shining full and clear upon it, but often clouded; nay, it may be, such a soul hath not yet at all seen it sensibly; yet this it may conclude, "Seeing *my desires are toward him*, and my chief desire is the sweet *light of his countenance*, though as yet I find not his face shining on me, yet I am persuaded it is not *set against me* to destroy me." Misbelief, when the soul is much under its influence and distempered by it, may suggest this sometimes too: but yet still there is some spark of hope that it is otherwise—that the eye of the Lord's pity is even in that estate upon us, and will in time manifest itself to be so.

To the other question, What assurance have the godly for that *seeing of good*, these blessings you speak of? This is the answer: *The eyes of the Lord are upon them, and his ears open to their prayer.* If you think him wise enough to know what is good for them, and rich enough to afford it, they are sure of one thing, he loves them; they have his good will; his heart is toward them, and therefore his eye and his ear. Can they then want any good? If *many days* and outward good things be indeed good for them, they can not miss of these. He hath given them already much better things than these, and hath yet far better in store for them: and what way soever the world go with them, this itself is happiness enough, that they are in his love, *whose loving kindness is better than life*, Ps. lxiii. 3. Sweet days have they that live in it. What better days would courtiers wish, than to be still in the eye and favor of the king, to be certain of his good will toward them, and to know of access and of a gracious acceptance of all their suits? Now thus it is with all the servants of the Great King, without prejudice one to another; he is ready to receive their requests, and able and willing to do them all good. Happy estate of a believer! He must not account himself poor and destitute in any condition, for he hath favor at court; he hath the King's eye and his ear; *the eyes of the Lord are upon him, and his ears open to his prayers.*

*The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous.*] This hath in it, 1. His love, the propension of his heart toward them. The eye is the servant of the affection; it naturally turns that way most where the heart is. Therefore thus the Lord is pleased to speak of his love to his own. He views still all the world, but he looks upon them with a peculiar delight: his eye is still on them, as it were, turned toward them from all the rest of the world. Though he doth not always let them see these his looks (for it is not said, they are always in sight of it; no, not here, yet still his eye is indeed upon them, attracted by the beauty of grace in them, his own work indeed, the beauty that he himself hath put upon them. And so as to the other, his ear too; he is willing to do for them what they ask; he loves even to hear them speak: finds a sweetness in the voice of their prayers, that makes his ear not only *open to their prayers*, but desirous of them as sweet music. Thus he speaks of both, Cant. ii. 14, *My dove, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.*

2. The phrase expresses his good providence and readiness to do them good; to supply their wants, and order their affairs for them; to answer their desires, and thus to let them find the fruits of that love which so leads his eye and ear toward them. *His eye is upon them;* he is devising and thinking what to do for them; it is the thing he thinks on most. His eyes are upon all, but they are busied, as he is pleased to express it, *they run to and fro through the earth, to show himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him*, &c. 2 Chronicles xvi. 9. So Deut. xi. 12: *His eyes are all the year on the land.* No wonder, then, he answers their suits in what is good for them, when it is still in his thoughts before. *He prevents them with the blessings of his goodness*, Psalm xxi. 3: they can not be so mindful of themselves as he is of them.

This is an unspeakable comfort, when a poor believer is in great perplexity of any kind in his outward or spiritual condition. "Well, I see no way; I am blind in this, but there are *eyes upon me*, that see well what is best. The Lord is minding me, and bringing about all to my advantage. *I am poor and needy indeed, but the Lord thinketh on me*, Ps. xi. 17." That turns the balance. Would not a man, though he had nothing, think himself happy, if some great prince was busily thinking how to advance and enrich him? Much more, if a number of kings were upon this thought, and devising together. Yet *these thoughts might perish*, as the psalmist speaks, Psalm cxlvi. 4. How much more solid happiness is it to have him, whose power is greatest, and whose thoughts fail not, eying thee, and devising thy good, and asking us, as it were, *What shall be done to the man whom the king will honor?*

*And his ears are open unto their prayer.*] What suits thou hast, thou mayest speak freely; he will not refuse thee anything that is for thy good.

"O! but I am not *righteous*, and all this is for the righteous only." Yet thou wouldst be such a one. Wouldst thou indeed? then in part thou art (as he who modestly and wisely changed the name of *wisemen* into *philosophers*, lovers of wisdom), art thou not righteous? yet, (φιλοδίκαιος) a *lover of righteousness*, thou art; then thou art one of the righteous. If still thine own unrighteousness

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be in thine eye, it may and should be so, to humble thee; but if it should scare thee from coming unto God, and offering thy suits with this persuasion, that *his ear is open*, should it make thee think that his favorable eye is not toward thee, yet there is mercy; creep in under the robe of his Son. Thou art sure *he* is *Jesus Christ the righteous*, and that the Father's eye is on him with delight, and then it shall be so on thee, being in him. Put thy petitions into his hand, who is the great Master of Requests; thou canst not doubt that he hath access, and that he hath that ear open to him, which thou thinkest shut to thee.

The exercise of prayer being so important, and bearing so great a part in the life and comfort of a Christian, it deserves to be very seriously considered. We will therefore subjoin some few considerations concerning it.

Prayer may be considered in a threefold notion. 1. As a duty we owe to God. As it is from him we expect and receive all, it is a very reasonable homage and acknowledgment, thus to testify the dependance of our being and life on him, and the dependance of our souls upon him, for being, and life, and all good; that we be daily suiters before his throne, and go to him for all. 2. As it constitutes the dignity and the delight of a spiritual mind, to have so near access unto God, and such liberty to speak to him. 3. As a proper and sure means, by divine appointment and promise, of obtaining at the hands of God those good things that are needful and convenient for us. And although some believers of lower knowledge do not (it may be) so distinctly know, and others not so particularly consider, all these in it, yet there is a latent notion of them all in the heart of every godly person, which stirs them and puts them on to the constant use of prayer, and to a love of it.

And as they are in these respects inclined and bent to the exercise of prayer, the Lord's ear is in like manner inclined to hear their prayer in these respects. 1. He takes it well at their hands, that they do offer it up as due worship to him, that they desire thus as they can to serve him. He accepts of those offerings graciously, passes by the imperfections in them, and hath regard to their sincere intention and desire. 2. It pleases him well that they delight in prayer, as converse with him; that they love to be much with him, and to speak to him often, and still aspire, by this way, to more acquaintance with him: that they are ambitious of this. 3. He willingly hears their prayers as the expressions of their necessities and desires; being both rich and bountiful, he loves to have blessings drawn out of his hands that way; as full breasts delight to be drawn. The Lord's treasure is always full, and therefore he is always communicative. In the first respect, prayer is acceptable to the Lord *as incense and sacrifice*, as David desires, Ps. cxli. 12: the Lord receives it as divine worship done to him. In the second respect, prayer is as the visits and sweet entertainment and discourse of friends together, and so is pleasing to the Lord, as the free opening of the mind, the *pouring out of the heart to him*, as it is called, Psalm lxii. 8; and David, in Psalm v. 1, calls it *his words* and *his meditation;* the word for that signifies *discourse* or *conference*. And, in the third sense, the Lord receives prayer as the suits of petitioners who are in favor with him, and whom he readily accords to. And this the word for *supplication* in the original, and the word here rendered *prayer*, and that rendered *cry* in the Psalm, do mean; and in that sense, the Lord's open ear and hearkening hath in it his readiness to answer, as one that doth hear, and to answer graciously and really, as hearing favorably.

I shall now add some directions: I. For prayer, that it may be accepted and answered. II. For observing the answers of it.

I. For prayer. 1. The qualification of the heart that offers it. 2. The way of offering it.

1. As to the qualification of the heart, it must be in some measure, 1*st*, A holy heart, according to that word here, *the righteous*. There must be *no regarding iniquity*, no entertaining of friendship with any sin, but a permanent love and desire of holiness. Thus, indeed, a man prays within himself, as in a sanctified place, whether the Lord's ear inclines, as of old to the Temple. He needs not run superstitiously to a church, &c. *Intra te ora, sed vide priùs an sis templum Dei;* Pray inwardly, but first see whether thou art thyself a temple of God. The sanctified man's body is the *temple of the Holy Ghost*, as the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. vi. 19; and his soul is the priest in it that offers sacrifice: both holy to the Lord, consecrated to him. 2*dly*, It must be a believing heart, for there is no praying without this. Faith is the very life of prayer, whence spring hope and comfort with it, to uphold the soul, and keep it steady under storms with the promises; and as Aaron and Hur to Moses, keeping it from fainting, strengthening the hands when they would begin to fail. Such is the force of that word, Psalm x. 17; for the *preparing of the heart* which God gives as an assurance and pledge of his *inclining his ear to hear*, signifies the *establishing of the heart:* that, indeed, is a main point of its preparedness, and due disposition for prayer. Now this is done by faith, without which, the soul, as the Apostle St. James speaks, is a rolling unquiet thing, *as a wave of the sea*, of itself unstable as the waters, and then *driven with the wind and tossed* to and fro with every temptation. See and feel thine own unworthiness as much as thou canst for thou art never bidden to believe in thyself; no, but that is countermanded as faith's great enemy. But what hath thy unworthiness to say against free promises of grace, which are the basis of thy faith? So then believe, that you may pray: this is

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David's advice, Psalm lxii. 8, *Trust in him at all times, ye people*, and then, *pour out your hearts before him.* Confide in him as a most faithful and powerful friend, and then you will open your hearts to him.

2. For the way of offering up prayer. It is a great art, a main point of the secret of religion, to be skilled in it, and of great concern for the comfort and success of it. Much is here to be considered, but for the present take these advices briefly. [1.] Offer not to speak to him without the heart in some measure seasoned and prepossessed with the sense of his greatness and holiness. And there is much in this; considering wisely to whom we speak, *the King, the Lord of glory*, and setting the soul before him, in his presence; and then reflecting on ourselves, and seeing what we are, how wretched, and base, and filthy, and unworthy of such access to so great a Majesty. The want of this *preparing of the heart* to speak in the Lord's ear, by the consideration of God and ourselves, is that which fills the excuse of prayer with much guiltiness; makes the heart careless, and slight and irreverent, and so displeases the Lord, and disappoints ourselves of that comfort in prayer, and those answers of it, of which otherwise we should have more experience. We rush in before him with anything, provided we can tumble out a few words; and do not weigh these things, and compose our hearts with serious thoughts and conceptions of God. The soul that studies and endeavors this most, hath much to do to attain to any right apprehensions of him (for *how little know we of him!*) yet should we, at least, set ourselves before him as the purest and greatest Spirit; a being infinitely more excellent than our minds or any creature can conceive. This would fill the soul with awe and reverence, and ballast it, so as to make it go more even through the exercise; to consider *the Lord*, as that prophet saw him, *sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him*, on his right hand and on his left, 1 Kings xxii. 19, and thyself a defiled sinner coming before him, *velut e palude suâ vilis ranuncula*, as a vile frog creeping out of some pool, as St. Bernard expresses it: how would this fill thee with holy fear! Oh! his greatness and our baseness, and Oh! the distance! This is Solomon's advice: *Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God, for God is in heaven and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few.* Eccl. v. 2. This would keep us from our ordinary babblings, that heart-nonsense, which, though the words be sense, yet through the inattention of the heart, are but as impertinent confused dreams in the Lord's ear; as there it follows, ver. 3.

[2.] When thou addressest thyself to prayer, desire and depend upon the assistance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God without which thou art not able truly to pray. It is a supernatural work, and therefore the principle of it must be supernatural. He that hath nothing of the Spirit of God, can not pray at all: he may howl as a beast in his necessity or distress, or may speak words of prayer, as some birds learn the language of men; but pray he can not. And they that have that Spirit, ought to seek the movings and actual workings of it in them in prayer, as the particular *help of their infirmities*, teaching both what to ask (a thing which of ourselves we know not), and then enabling them to ask, breathing forth their desires in such sighs and groans, as are the breath not simply of their own, but of God's Spirit.

[3.] As these two precautions are to be taken before prayer, so, in the exercise of it, you should learn to keep a watchful eye over your own hearts throughout, for every step of the way, that they start not out. And in order to this, strive to keep up a continual remembrance of that presence of God, which in the entry of the work, is to be set before the eye of the soul. And our endeavor ought to be to fix it upon that view, that it turn not aside nor downward, but from beginning to end keep sight of him, who sees and marks whether we do so or no. They that art most inspective and watchful in this, will still be faulty in it; but certainly the less watchful the more faulty. And this we ought to do, to be aspiring daily to more stability of mind in prayer, and to be driving out somewhat of that roving and wandering, which is so universal an evil, and certainly so grievous, not to those who have it most, but who observe and discover it most and endeavor most against it. A strange thing! that the mind, even the renewed mind should be so ready, not only at other times, but in the exercise of prayer, wherein we peculiarly come so near to God, yet even then to slip out and leave him, and follow some poor vanity or other instead of him! Surely the godly man, when he thinks on this, is exceedingly ashamed of himself, can not tell what to think of it. *God is exceeding joy*, whom, in his right thoughts, he seems so much above the world and all things in it, yet to use him thus!—when he is speaking to him, to break off from that, and hold discourse, or change a word with some base thought that steps in, and whispers to him: or, at the best, not to be steadfastly minding the Lord to whom he speaks, and possessed with the regard of his presence, and of his business and errand with him.

This is no small piece of our misery here: these wanderings are evidence to us, that we are not at home. But though we should be humbled for this, and still be laboring against it, yet should we not be so discouraged, as to be driven from the work. Satan would desire no better than that; it were to help him to his wish. And sometimes a Christian may be driven to think, "What shall I still do thus, abusing my Lord's name, and the privilege he hath given me? I had better leave off."



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No, not so by any means. Strive against the miserable evil that is within thee, but cast not away thy happiness. Be doing still. It is a froward childish humor, when anything agrees not to our mind, to throw all away. Thou mayest come off, as Jacob, with *halting* from thy *wrestlings*, and yet obtain the *blessing* for which thou wrestlest.

[4.] Those graces which are the due qualities of the heart, disposing it for prayer in the exercise of it, should be excited and acted, as holiness, the love of it, the desire of increase and growth of it, so, the humbling and melting of the heart, and chiefly faith, which is mainly set on work in prayer, draw forth the sweetness and virtues of the promises, teaching us to desire earnestly their performance to the soul, and to believe that they shall be performed; to have before our eyes his goodness and faithfulness who hath promised, and to rest upon that. And for success in prayer, exercising faith in it, it is altogether necessary to interpose the Mediator, and to look through him, and to speak and petition by him, who warns us of this, that there is no other way to speak: *No man cometh to the Father but by me.* John xiv. 6. As the Jews, when they prayed, looked toward the temple, where was the mercy-seat, and the peculiar presence of God [*Shechinah*], thus ought we in all our praying to look on Christ, who is our *propitiatory*, and *in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily.* Col. ii. 9. The forgetting of this, may be the cause of our many disappointments.

[5.] Fervency; not to seek coldly: that presages refusal. There must be fire in the sacrifice, otherwise it ascends not. There is no sacrifice without incense, and no incense without fire. Our remiss, dead hearts, are not likely to do much for the church of God, nor for ourselves. Where are those strong cries that should pierce the heavens? *His ear is open to their cry.* He hears the faintest, coldest prayer, but not with that delight and propenseness to grant it; his ear is not on it, as the word there is, Psalm lv. 17; he takes no pleasure in hearing it; but cries, heart-cries, Oh! these take his ear, and move his bowels; for these are the voice, the cries of his own children. A strange word of encouragement to importunity is that, *Give him no rest*, Isa. lxii. 7; suffer him not to be in quiet till *he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.* A few such suiters, in these times, were worth thousands such as we are. Our prayers stick in our breasts, scarcely come forth; much less do they go up and ascend with that piercing force that would open up the way for deliverances to come down.

But in this there must be some difference between temporal and spiritual things. That prayer which is in the right strain, can not be too fervent in anything; but the desire of the thing in temporals may he too earnest. A feverish distempered heat diseases the soul; therefore, in these things, a holy indifferency concerning the particular may, and should be, joined with the fervency of prayer. But in spiritual things, there is no danger in vehemency of desire. *Covet* these, *hunger and thirst* for them, be incessantly ardent in the suit; yet even in these, in some particulars (as with respect to the degree and measure of grace, and some peculiar furtherances), they should be presented so with earnestness, as that withal it be with a reference and resignation of it to the wisdom and love of our Father.

II. For the other point, the answer of our prayers, which is implied in this *openness of the ear*, it is a thing very needful to be considered and attended to. If we think that prayer is indeed a thing that God takes notice of, and hath regard to in his dealings with his children, it is certainly a point of duty and wisdom in them, to observe how he takes notice of it, and bends his ear to it, and puts his hand to help, and so answers it. This both furnishes matter of praise, and stirs up the heart to render it. Therefore, in the Psalms, the *hearing of prayer* is so often observed and recorded, and made a part of the song of praise. And withal it endears both God and prayer unto the soul, as we have both together, Psalm cxvi. 1, *I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.* The transposition in the original is pathetical, *I love, because the Lord hath heard my voice.* I am in love, and particularly this causes it; I have found so much kindness in the Lord, that I can not but love. *He hath heard my voice.* And then it wins his esteems and affection to prayer. Seeing I find this virtue in it, we shall never part again; *I will call upon him as long as I live.* Seeing prayer draweth help and favors from heaven, I shall not be to seek for a way, in any want or straight that can befall me.

In this there is need of direction; but too many rules may as much confuse a matter, as too few, and do many times perplex the mind and multiply doubts; as many laws do multiply pleading. Briefly, then,

1. Slothful minds do often neglect the answers of God, even when they are most legible in the grant of the very thing itself that was desired. It may be through a total inadvertence in this kind, through never thinking on things as answers of our requests: or possibly, a continual eager pursuit of more, turns away the mind from considering what it hath upon request obtained; we are still so bent upon what further we would have, that we never think what is already done for us, which is one of the most ordinary causes of ingratitude.

2. But though it be not in the same thing that we desire that our prayers are answered, yet, when the Lord changes our petitions in his answers, it is always for the better. He regards (according to that known word of St. Augustine, *Si non ad voluntatem ad utilitatem*) our *well* more than our *will*. We beg deliverance

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we are not unanswered, if he give patience and support. Be it under a spiritual trial or temptation. *My grace is sufficient for thee.* And where the Lord doth thus, it is certainly better for the time, than the other would be. Observe here, *His ears are open to the righteous*, but *his eyes are on them too.* They have not so his ear as to induce him blindly to give them what they ask, whether it be fit or no; but *his eye is on them*, to see and consider their estate, and to know better than themselves what is best, and accordingly to answer. This is no prejudice, but a great privilege, and the happiness of his children, that they have a Father who knows what is fit for them, and *withholds no good* from them. And this commutation and exchange of our requests a Christian observing, may usually find out the particular answer of his prayers; and if sometimes he doth not, then his best way is not to subtilize and amuse himself much in that, but rather to keep on in the exercise, knowing (as the apostle speaks in another case) this for certain, *that their labor shall not be in vain in the Lord*, 1 Cor. xv. ult.; and as the prophet hath it, Isa. xlv. 19, *He hath not said unto the house of Jacob, seek ye me in vain.*

3. Only this we should always remember, not to set bounds and limits to the Lord in point of time, not to set him a day, that thou wilt attend so long and no longer. How patiently will some men bestow long attendance on others, where they expect some very poor good or courtesy at their hands! Yet we are very brisk and hasty with him who never delays us but for our good, to ripen those mercies for us which we, as foolish children, would pluck while they are green, and have neither that sweetness and goodness in them which they shall have in his time. All his works are done in their season. Were there nothing to check our impatiences, but his greatness, and the greatness of those things we ask for, and our own unworthiness, these considerations might curb them, and persuade us how reasonable it is that we should wait. He is a king well worth waiting on; and there is in the very waiting on him, an honor and a happiness far above us. And the things we seek are great; forgiveness of sins, evidence of sonship and heirship, heirship of a kingdom; and we condemned rebels, born heirs of the bottomless pit! And shall such as we be in such haste with such a Lord in so great requests! But further, the attendance which this reason enforces, is sweetened by the consideration of his wisdom and love, that he hath foreseen and chosen the very hour for each mercy fit for us, and will not delay it a moment. Never any yet repented their waiting, but found it fully recompensed with the opportune answer, in such a time as they were then forced to confess was the only best. *I waited patiently*, says the Psalmist, *in waiting I waited*, but it was all well bestowed, *He inclined to me and heard my cry, brought me up*, &c., Psalm. xl. 1. And then he afterward falls into admiration of the Lord's method, *his wonderful workings and thoughts to us-ward* "While I was waiting and saw nothing, thy *thoughts were toward* and for me, and thou didst then *work* when thy goodness was most remarkable and *wonderful.*"

When thou art in great affliction, outward or inward, thou thinkest (it may be) he regards thee not. Yea, but he doth. Thou art his gold, he knows the time of refining thee, and of then taking thee out of the furnace; he is versed and skilful in that work. Thou sayest, "I have cried long for power against sin, and for some evidence of pardon, and find no answer to either;" yet leave him not. He never yet cast away any that sought him, and stayed by him, and resolved, whatsoever came of it, to lie at his footstool, and to wait, were it all their lifetime, for a good word or a good look from him. And they choose well who make that their great desire and expectation; for one of his good words or looks will make them happy for ever; and as he is truth itself, they are sure not to miss of it. *Blessed are all they that wait for him.* And thou that sayest, thou canst not find pardon of sin, and power against it; yet consider whence are those desires of both, which thou once didst not care for. Why dost thou hate that sin which thou didst love, and art troubled and burdened with the guilt of it, under which thou wentest so easily, and which thou didst not feel before? Are not these something of his own work? Yes, surely. And know he will not leave it unfinished, nor *forsake the work of his hands.* Psalm cxxxviii. 8. *His eye may be on thee*, though thou seest him not, *and his ear open to thy cry*, though for the present he speaks not to thee as thou desirest. It is not said, that his children always see and hear him sensibly; but yet, when they do not, he is beholding them and hearing them graciously, and will show himself to them, and answer them seasonably.

David says, Psalm xxii. 2, *I cry in the daytime, and thou hearest not, and in the night season, and am not silent;* yet will he not entertain hard thoughts of God, nor conclude against him; on the contrary, he acknowledges, *Thou art holy*, ver. 3, where, by *holiness*, is meant his faithfulness (I conceive) to his own: as it follows, *Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel*, to wit, for the favors he hath showed his people, as ver. 4, *Our fathers trusted in thee.*

Let the Lord's open ear persuade us to make much use of it. *Clavis diei et sera noctis:* The key of day and the lock of night. Be much in this sweet and fruitful exercise of prayer, together and apart, under the sense of these three considerations mentioned above: the duty, the dignity, and the utility of prayer.

1. The *duty:* It is due to the Lord to be

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worshipped and acknowledged thus, as the fountain of good. How will men crouch and bow one to another upon small requests; and shall he only be neglected by the most, from *all* have *life and breath and all things!* (as the apostle speaks in his sermon, Acts xvii. 25). And then,

2. Consider the *dignity* of this, to be admitted into so near converse with the highest majesty. Were there nothing to follow, no answer at all, prayer pays itself in the excellency of its nature, and the sweetness that the soul finds in it. Poor wretched man, to be admitted into heaven while he is on earth, and there to come and speak his mind freely to the Lord of heaven and earth, as his friend, as his Father! to empty all his complaints into his bosom; when wearied with the follies and miseries of the world, to refresh his soul in his God. Where there is anything of his love, this is a privilege of the highest sweetness; for they who love, find much delight in discoursing together, and count all hours short, and think the day runs too fast, that is so spent; and they who are much in this exercise, the Lord doth impart *his secrets* much to them. See Psalm xxv. 14.

2. Consider again, it is the most profitable exercise; no lost time, as profane hearts judge it, but only time gained. All blessings attend this work. It is the richest traffic in the world, for it trades with heaven, and brings home what is most precious there. And as holiness disposes to prayer, so prayer befriends holiness, increases it much. Nothing so refines and purifies the soul as frequent prayer. If the often conversing with wise men doth so teach and advance the soul in wisdom, how much more then will converse with God! This makes the soul despise the things of the world, and in a manner makes it divine; winds up the soul from the earth, acquainting it with delights that are infinitely sweeter.

The natural heart is full-stuffed with prejudices against the way of holiness, which dissuade and detain it; and therefore the holy Scriptures most fitly dwell much on this point, asserting the true advantage of it to the soul, and removing those mistakes which it has in respect of that way.

Thus here, and to press it the more home, verse 10, &c., the apostle, having used the psalmist's words, now follows it forth in his own, and extends what was said concerning the particular way of meekness and love, &c., in the general doctrine, to all the paths of *righteousness*.

The main conclusion is, that happiness is the certain consequent and fruit of holiness; all good, even outward good, so far as it holds good, and is not inconsistent with a higher good. If we did believe this more, we should feel it more, and so, upon feeling and experiment, believe it more strongly. All the heavy judgments we feel or fear, are they not the fruit of our own ways, of profaneness, and pride, and malice, and abounding ungodliness? All cry out of hard times, evil days; and yet, who is taking the right way to better them? Yea, who is not still helping to make them worse? Are we not ourselves the greatest enemies of our own peace? Who looks either rightly backward, reflecting on his former ways, or rightly forward, to direct better his way that is before him? Who either says, *What have I done?* (as Jer. viii. 6), or, *What shall I do?* (Acts xvi. 30). And indeed, the one of these depends on the other. *Consilium futurum ex præterito venit* (SENECA): "Future determination springs from the past." *I considered my ways*, says David, turned them over and over, as the word is, *and then I turned my feet unto thy testimonies*. Psalm cxix. 59.

Are there any, for all the judgments fallen on us, or that threaten us, returning apace with regret and hatred of sin, hastening unto God, and *mourning and weeping as they go*, bedewing each step with their tears? Yea, where is that newness of life that the word has called for so long, and that now the word and the rod together are so loudly calling for? Who is more *refraining his tongue from evil, and his lips from guile*; changing oaths, and lies, and calumnies, into a new language, into prayers, and reverend speaking of God, and joining a suitable consonant carriage? Who is *eschewing evil and doing good*, laboring to be fertile in holiness, *to bring forth much fruit to God?* This were the way *to see good days* indeed; this is the way to the longest life, the only long life and *length of days*, one eternal day: as St Augustine comments on those words, *One day in thy courts is better than a thousand*, Psal. lxxxiv. 10. *Millia dierum desiderant homines, et multum volunt hic vivere; contemnant millia dierum, desiderent unum, qui non habet ortum et occasum, cui non cedit hesternus, quem non urget crastinus.* "Men desire thousands of days, and wish to live long here: rather let them despise thousands of days, and desire that one which hath neither dawn nor darkening, to which no yesterday gives place, which yields to no to-morrow."

The reason added is above all exception, it is supreme; *the eyes of the Lord*, &c. If he who made times and seasons, and commands and forms them as he will, if he can give *good days*, or make men happy, then the only sure way to it must be the way of his obedience; to be in the constant favor of the great King, and still in his gracious thoughts; to have his eye and his ear. If this will serve the turn (and if this do it not, I pray you, what will?) then the righteous man is the only happy man, *for the eyes of the Lord are upon him*, &c. Surer happy days may be expected hence, than theirs who draw them from the aspect of the stars; the eyes of the Father of lights benignly beholding them, the *trine aspect* of the blessed Trinity. The love he carries to them, draws his eyes still

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toward them; there is no forgetting of them, nor slipping of the fit season to do them good: his mind, I may say, runs on that. He sees how it is with them, and receives their suits gladly, rejoicing to put favors upon them. He is their assured friend, yea, he is their Father; what then can they want? Surely they can not miss of any good that his love and power can help them to.

*But his face is against them that do evil.*] So our happiness and misery are in *his face*, his looks. Nothing so comfortable as his favorable face, nothing so terrible again as his face—*his anger*, as the Hebrew word is often taken, that signifies *his face*. And yet, how many sleep sound under this misery! But believe it, it is a dead and a deadly sleep; the Lord standing on terms of enmity with thee, and yet thy soul *at ease!* Pitiful, accursed ease! I regard not the differences of your outward estate; that is not a thing worth the speaking of. If thou be poor and base, and in the world's eye but a wretch, and withal under the hatred of God, as being an impenitent, hardened sinner, those other things are nothing; this is the top, yea, the total sum of thy misery. Or be thou beautiful, or rich, or noble, or witty, or all these together, or what thou wilt, yet, is *the face of the Lord against thee?* Think as thou wilt, thy estate (*splendida miseria*) is not to be envied, but lamented: I can not say, much good do it thee, with all thy enjoyments, for it is certain they can do thee no good; and if thou dost not believe this now, the day is at hand wherein thou shalt be forced to believe it, finding it then irrevocably true. If you will, you may still follow *the things of the world, walk after the lusts of your own hearts*, neglect God, and please yourselves, but, as Solomon's word is of judgment, Eccl. ix. 9, *Remember that the face of the Lord is against thee*, and in that judgment he shall unveil it, and let thee see it against thee. Oh, the most terrible of all sights!

The godly often do not see the Lord's favorable looks, while he is eying them; and the wicked usually do not see nor perceive, neither will believe that *his face is against them;* but, besides that the day of full discovery is coming, the Lord doth sometimes let both the one and the other know somewhat how he stands affected toward them. In peculiar deliverances and mercies he tells his own, that he forgets them not, but both sees and hears them when they think he does neither, after that loving and gracious manner which they desire, and which is here meant; and sometimes, he lets forth glances of his bright countenance, darts in a beam upon their souls that is worth more than many worlds. And on the other side, he is pleased sometimes to make it known that his face is against the wicked, either by remarkable outward judgments, which to them are the vent of his just enmity against them, or to some he speaks it more home in horrors and affrights of conscience, which to them are earnests and pledges of their full misery, that *inheritance of wo* reserved, as the joys and comforts of believers are, of their *inheritance of glory.*

Therefore, if you have any belief of these things, be persuaded, be entreated to forsake the way of ungodliness. Do not flatter yourselves and dream of escaping, when you hear of outward judgments on your neighbors and brethren, but tremble and be humbled. Remember our Savior's words, *Think ye that those on whom the tower of Siloam fell, were greater sinners than others? I tell you, nay, but except you repent, you shall all likewise perish*, Luke xiii. 4, 5. This seeming harsh word, he who was wisdom and sweetness itself utttered, and even in it spoke like a Savior: he speaks of perishing, that they might not perish, and presses repentance by the heavy doom of impenitence.

When you hear of this, there is none of you would willingly choose it, that the Lord's face should be against you, although upon very high offers made to you of other things. You think, I know, that the very sound of it is somewhat fearful, and on the other side, have possibly some confused notion of his favor, as a thing desirable; and yet do not bestir yourselves, to avoid the one and inquire after the other; which is certainly by reason of your unbelief. For if you think of the love of God, as his word speaks of it, and as you will say you do, whence is it, I pray you, that there is no trifle in this world that will not take more deeply with you, and which you follow not with more earnestness, than this great business of reconciliation with God, in order to your finding his face not against you, but graciously toward you, *His eyes upon you, and his ears open to your prayer.*

Your blessedness is not—no, believe it, it is not where most of you seek it, in things below you. How can that be? It must be a higher good to make you happy. While you labor and sweat for it in anything under the sun, your pains run all to waste; you seek a happy life in the region of death. Here, here it is alone, in the love and favor of God, in having his countenance and friendship, and free access and converse; and this is nowhere to be found, but in the ways of holiness.

VER. 13. And who is he that will harm you, if you be followers of that which is good.

THIS the apostle adds, as a further reason of the safety and happiness of that way he points out, a reason drawn from its own nature. There is something even intrinsical in a meek, and upright, and holy carriage, that is apt, in part, to free a man from many evils and mischiefs which the ungodly are exposed to, and do readily draw upon themselves. Your spotless and harmless deportment will

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much bind up the hands even of your enemies, and sometimes, possibly, somewhat allay and cool the malice of their hearts, that they can not so rage against you as otherwise they might. It will be somewhat strange and monstrous to rage against the innocent. *Who is he that will harm you?* Here are two things, I. The carriage. II. The advantage of it.

I. Their carriage is expressed: *followers of that which is good.* The Greek word is, *imitators.*

There is an imitation of men that is impious and wicked, which consists in taking the copy of their sins. Again, there is an imitation which though not so grossly evil, yet is poor and servile, being in mean things, yea, sometimes descending to imitate the very imperfections of others, as fancying some comeliness in them; as some of Basil's scholars, who imitated his slow speaking, which he had a little in the extreme, and could not help. But this is always laudable, and worthy of the best minds, to be *imitators of that which is good*, wheresoever they find it; for that stays not in any man's person, as the ultimate pattern, but rises to the highest grace, being man's nearest likeness to God, his image and resemblance (and so, following the example of the saints in holiness, we look higher than them, and consider them as receivers, but God as the first owner and dispenser of grace), bearing his stamp and superscription, and belonging peculiarly to him, in what hand soever it be found, as carrying the mark of no other owner than him.

The word of God contains our copy in its perfection, and very legible and clear; and so, the imitation of good, in the complete rule of it, is the regulating of our ways by the word. But even there we find, besides general rules, the particular tracks of life of divers eminent holy persons, and those on purpose set before us, that we may know holiness not to be an idle, imaginary thing, but that men have really been holy, though not altogether sinless, yet, holy and spiritual in some good measure; have shined as lights amid a perverse generation, as greater stars in a dark night, and were yet *men*, as St. James says of Elias, like us in nature (ὁμοιοπαθὴς) and in the frailty of it: *subject to like passions as we are.* James v. 17. Why may we not then aspire to be holy as they were, and attain to it?—although we should fall short of the degree, yet not stopping at a small measure, but running further, *pressing still forward toward the mark;* following them in the way they went, though at a distance; not reaching them, and yet walking, yea, running after them as fast as we can; not judging of holiness by our own sloth and natural averseness, taking it for a singularity fit only for rare extraordinary persons, such as prophets and apostles were, or as the church of Rome fancies those to be, to whom it vouchsafes a room in the roll of saints. Do you not know that holiness is the only *via regia*, this *following of good* the path wherein all the children of God must walk, one following after another, each striving to equal, and, if they could, to outstrip even those they look on as most advanced in it? This is, among many others, a misconceit in the Romish church, that they seem to make holiness a kind of impropriate good, which the common sort can have little share in, almost all piety being shut up within cloister-walls, as its only fit dwelling; but it hath not liked their lodging, it seems; it has flown over the walls away from them, for there is little of it even there to be found. Their opinion, however, places it there, as having little to do abroad in the world; whereas, the truth is, that all Christians have this for their common task, though some are under more peculiar obligations to study this one copy. Look on the rule of holiness, and be followers of it, and followers or imitators one of another, so far as their carriage agrees with that primitive copy, as written after it. *Be ye followers of me*, μιμηταί, says the apostle, even to the meanest Christians among those he wrote to, but thus, *as I am of Christ.* 1 Cor. xi. 1.

It is thus with us? Are we zealous and emulous followers of that which is good, exciting each other by our example to a holy and Christian conversation, *provoking one another* (so the apostle's word is) *to love and to good works?* Heb. x. 24. Or, are not the most mutual corrupters of each other, and of the places and societies where they live; some leading, and others following, in their ungodliness; not regarding the course of those who are most desirous to walk holily, or, if at all, doing it with a corrupt and evil eye, not in order to study and follow what is good in them, their way of holiness, but to espy any the least wrong step, to take exact notice of any imperfection or malignant slander, and by this either to reproach religion, or to hearten or harden themselves in their irreligion and ungodliness, seeking warrant for their own willing licentiousness in the unwilling failings of God's children? And, in their converse with such as themselves, they are following their profane way, and flattering and blessing one another in it. "What need we be so precise?" And, "If I should not do as others, they would laugh at me: I should pass for a fool." Well, thou wilt be a fool of the most wretched kind, rather than be accounted one by such as are fools, and know not at all wherein true wisdom consists.

Thus the most are carried with the stream of this wicked world, their own inward corruption easily agreeing and suiting with it; every man as a drop, falling into a torrent, and easily made one, and running along with it into that dead sea where it empties itself.

But those whom the Lord hath a purpose to sever and save, he carries in a course con-

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trary even to that violent stream. And these are the students of holiness, *the followers of good*, who bend their endeavors thus, and look on all sides diligently, on what may animate and advance them; on the example of the saints in former times, and on the good they espy in those who live together with them; and above all, studying that perfect rule in the Scriptures, and that highest and first pattern there so often set before them, even the author of that rule, the Lord himself, *to be holy as he is holy, to be bountiful and merciful as their heavenly Father*, and in all laboring to be, as the apostle exhorts, *followers of God as dear children*. Eph. v. 1, 2. [Τέλος ἀνθρώπου ὁμοιωσις θεῷ, says Pythagoras.] Children who are beloved of their father, and do love and reverence him, will be ambitious to be like him, and particularly aim at the following of any virtues or excellency in him. Now, thus it is most reasonable that it should be in the children of God, their Father being the highest and best of all excellency and perfection.

But this excellent pattern is drawn down nearer their view, in the Son Jesus Christ; where we have that highest example made low, and yet losing nothing of its perfection, so that we may study God in man, and read all our lesson, without any blot, even in our own nature. And this is truly the only way to be the best proficients in this following and imitating of all good. In him we may learn all, even those lessons which men most despise, God teaching them by acting them, and calling us to follow: *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart*. Matt. xi. 29. But this is too large a subject. Would you advance in all grace? Study Christ much, and you shall find not only the pattern in him, but strength and skill from him to follow it.

II. The advantage; *Who is he that will harm you?*

The very name of it says so much: it is *a good*, worthy the following for itself. But there is this further to enforce it, that, besides higher benefit, it oftentimes cuts off the occasions of present evils and disturbances, which otherwise are incident to men. *Who is he that will harm you?* Men, evil men, will often be overcome by our blameless and harmless behavior.

1. In the life of a godly man, taken together in the whole body and frame of it, there is a grave beauty or comeliness, which oftentimes forces some kind of reverence and respect to it, even in ungodly minds.

2. Though a natural mind can not love them spiritually, as graces of the spirit of God (for so only the partakers of them are lovers of them), yet he may have, and usually hath, a natural liking and esteem of some kind of virtues which are in a Christian, and are not, in their right nature, to be found in any other, though a moralist may have somewhat like them; *meekness*, and *patience*, and *charity*, and *fidelity*, &c.

3. These, and other such like graces, do make a Christian life so inoffensive and calm, that, except where the matter of their God or religion is made the crime, malice itself can scarcely tell where to fasten its teeth or lay hold; it hath nothing to pull by, though it would, yea, oftentimes, for want of work or occasions, it will fall asleep for a while. Whereas ungodliness and iniquity, sometimes by breaking out into notorious crimes, draws out the sword of civil justice, and where it rises not so high, yet it involves men in frequent contentions and quarrels. Prov. xxiii. 29. How often are the lusts and pride, and covetousness of men, paid with dangers and troubles, and vexation, which, besides what is abiding them hereafter, do even in this present life spring out of them! These, the godly pass free of by their just, and mild, and humble carriage. *Whence so many jars and strifes* among the greatest part, but from their unchristian hearts and lives, *from their lusts that war in their members*, as St. James says, their self-love and unmortified passions? One will abate nothing of his will, nor the other of his. Thus, where pride and passion meet on both sides, it can not be but a fire will be kindled; when hard flints strike together, the sparks will fly about: but a soft, mild spirit is a great preserver of its own peace, kills the power of contest; as woolpacks, or such like soft matter, most deaden the force of bullets. *A soft answer turns away wrath*, says Solomon, Prov. xv. 1, beats it off, *breaks the bone*, as he says, the very strength of it, as the bones are of the body.

And thus we find it, those who think themselves high-spirited, and will bear least, as they speak, are often, even by that, forced to bow most, or to burst under it; while humility and meekness escape many a burden, and many a blow, always keeping peace within, and often without too.

*Reflection* 1. If this were duly considered, might it not do somewhat to induce your minds to love the way of religion, for that it would so much abate the turbulency and unquietness that abound in the lives of men, a great part whereof the most do procure by the earthliness and distemper of their own carnal minds, and the disorder in their ways that arises thence?

*Reflection* 2. You whose hearts are set toward God, and your feet entered into his ways, I hope will find no reason for a change, but many reasons to commend and endear those ways to you every day more than the last, and, among the rest, even this, that in them you escape many even present mischiefs which you see the ways of the world are full of. And, if you will be careful to ply your rule and study your copy better, you shall find it more so. The more you *follow that which is good*, the more shall you avoid a number of outward evils, which are ordinarily drawn upon men by their own enormities and passions. Keep as close as

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you can to the genuine, even track of a Christian walk, and labor for a prudent and meek behavior, adorning your holy profession, and this shall adorn you, and sometimes gain *those that are without*, yea, even your enemies shall be constrained to approve it.

It is well known how much the spotless lives and patient sufferings of the primitive Christians did sometimes work upon their beholders, yea, on their persecutors, and persuaded some who would not share with them in their religion, yet to speak and write on their behalf. Seeing, then, that reason and experience do jointly aver it, that the lives of men conversant together have generally a great influence one upon another (for example is an animated or living rule, and is both the shortest and most powerful way of teaching)—

[1.] Whosoever of you are in an exemplary or leading place in relation to others, be it many or few, be ye, first, *followers of God*. Set before you the rule of holiness, and withal the best and highest examples of those who have walked according to it, and then you will be leading in it those who are under you, and they being bent to follow you, in so doing will *follow that which is good*. Lead and draw them on, by admonishing, and counselling, and exhorting; but especially, by walking. Pastors, be [τύποι] *ensamples* to the flock, or *models*, as our apostle hath it, 1 Peter v. 3, that they may be stamped aright, taking the impression of your lives. Sound doctrine alone will not serve. Though the water you give your flocks be pure, yet, if you lay spotted rods before them, it will bring forth spotted lives in them. Either teach not at all, or teach by the rhetoric of your lives.* Elders, be such in grave and pious carriage, whatsoever be your years; for young men may be so, and, possibly, gray hairs may have nothing under them but gaddishness and folly many years old—habituated and inveterate ungodliness. Parents and masters, let your children and servants read in your lives the life and power of godliness, the practice of piety, not lying in your windows or corners of your houses, and confined within the clasp of the book bearing that or any such like title, but shining in your lives.

[2.] You that are easily receptive of the impression of example, beware of the stamp of unholiness, and of a carnal, formal course of profession, whereof the examples are most abounding; but, though they be fewer who bear the lively image of God impressed on their hearts and expressed in their actions, yet study these, and be followers of them, as they are of Christ. I know you will espy much irregular and unsanctified carriage in us who are set up for the ministry, and if you look round, you will find the world lying in wickedness: yet if there be any who have any sparks of Divine light in them, converse with those, and follow them.

* Η μὴ διδάσκειν, ἢ διδάσκειν τῷ τρόπῳ.

[3.] And, generally, this I say to all (for none are so complete but they may espy some imitable and emulable good, even in meaner Christians), acquaint yourselves with the word, the rule of holiness; and then, with an eye to that, look on one another, and be zealous of progress in the ways of holiness. Choose to converse with such as may excite you and advance you, both by their advice and example. Let not a corrupt generation in which you live, be the worse by you, nor you the worse by it. As far as you necessarily engage in some conversation with those who are unholy, let them not pull you into the mire, but, if you can, help them out. And let not any custom of sin prevailing about you, by being familiarly seen, gain upon you, so as to think it fashionable and comely, yea, or so as not to think it deformed and hateful. Know, that you must row against the stream of wickedness in the world, unless you would be carried with it to the dead sea, or lake of perdition. Take that grave counsel given, Rom. xii. 2: *Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind;* that is, the daily advancement in renovation, purifying and refining every day.

Now, in this way you shall have sweet inward peace and joy, as well as some outward advantage, in that men, except they are monstrously cruel and malicious, will not so readily *harm you;* it will abate much of their rage. But, however, if you do not escape suffering by your holy carriage, yea, *if you suffer* even for it, yet in that *are you happy* (as the apostle immediately adds):—

VER. 14. But and if you suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.

IN this verse are two things: First, Even in the most blameless way of a Christian, his suffering is supposed. Secondly, His happiness, even in suffering, is asserted.

I. Suffering is supposed, notwithstanding righteousness, yea, *for righteousness;* and that, not as a rare unusual accident, but as the frequent lot of Christians; as Luther calls Persecution, *malus genius Evangelii, The evil genius of the gospel.* And we, being forewarned of this, as not only the possible, but the frequent lot of the saints, ought not to hearken to the false prophecies of our own self-love, which divines what it would gladly have, and easily persuades us to believe it. Think not that any prudence will lead you by all oppositions and malice of an ungodly world. Many winter blasts will meet you in the most inoffensive way of religion, if you keep straight to it. Suffering and war with the world, is a part of the godly man's portion here, which seems hard, but take it altogether, it is sweet: none in their wits will refuse that legacy entire, *In the world ye shall have trouble, but in me ye shall have peace.* John xvi. *ult.*

Look about you, and see if there be any es-

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tate of man, or course of life, exempted from troubles. The greatest are usually subject to greatest vexations; as the largest bodies have the largest shadows attending them. We need not tell nobles and rich men that contentment doth not dwell in great palaces and titles, nor in full coffers; they feel it, that they are not free of much anguish and molestation, and that a proportionable train of cares, as constantly as of servants, follows great place and wealth. Riches and trouble, or noise, are signified by the same Hebrew word. Compare Job xxxvi. 19, with xxx. 24. And kings find that their crowns, which are set so richly with diamonds without, are lined with thorns within. And if we speak of men who are *servants to unrighteousness*, beside what is to come, are they not often forced to suffer, among the service of their lusts, the distempers that attend unhealthy intemperance, the poverty that dogs luxury at the heels, and the fit punishment of voluptuous persons in painful diseases, which either quickly cut the thread of life, or make their aged bones full of the sins of their youth? Job xx. 11. Take what way you will, there is no place or condition so fenced and guarded, but public calamities, or personal griefs, find a way to reach us.

Seeing, then, we must suffer, whatever course we take, this kind of suffering, *to suffer for righteousness*, is far the best. What Julius Cæsar said ill of doing ill, *Si violandum est jus, regnandi causa violandum*, we may well say of suffering ill: "If it must be, it is best to be for a kingdom." And these are the terms on which Christians are called to suffer for righteousness: *If we will reign with Christ*, certain it is, *we must suffer with him*; and, *if we do suffer with him*, it is as certain *we shall reign with him*. 2 Tim. ii. 12. And therefore such sufferers are *happy*.

But I shall prosecute this suffering for righteousness, only with relation to the apostle's present reasoning. His conclusion he establishes, 1. From the favor and protection of God; 2. From the nature of the thing itself. Now we would consider the consistence of this supposition with those reasons.

1st. From the favor or protection of God. *The eyes of the Lord* being *on the righteous* for their good, and *his ear open to their prayer*, how is it that, notwithstanding all this favor and inspection, they are so much exposed to suffering, and even for the regard and affection they bear toward him, *suffering for righteousness?* These seem not to agree well; yet they do.

It is not said that his eye is so on them, as that he will never see them afflicted, nor have them suffer anything; no, but this is their great privilege and comfort in suffering, that his gracious eye is then upon them, and sees their trouble, and his ear toward them, not so as to grant them an exemption (for that they will not seek for), but seasonable deliverance, and, in the meanwhile, strong support, as is evident in that xxxivth Psalm. If his eye be always on them, he sees them suffer often, for *their afflictions are many* (v. 19), and if his ear be to them, he hears many sighs and cries pressed out by sufferings. And they are content; this is enough, yea, better than not to suffer; they suffer, and often directly for him, but he sees it all, takes perfect notice of it, therefore it is not lost. And they are forced to cry, but none of their cries escape his ear. He hears, and he manifests that he sees and hears, for *he delivers them*; and, till he does, he keeps them from being crushed under the weight of the suffering: *he keeps all his bones, not one of them is broken* (ver. 20). He sees, yea, appoints and provides these conflicts for his choicest servants. He sets his champions to encounter the malice of Satan and the world, for his sake, to give proof of the truth and the strength of their love to him for whom they suffer, and to overcome even in suffering.

He is sure of his designed advantages out of the sufferings of his church and of his saints for his name. He loses nothing, and they lose nothing; but their enemies, when they rage most, and prevail most, are ever the greatest losers. His own glory grows, the graces of his people grow, yea, their very number grows, and that sometimes most by their greatest sufferings. This was evident in the first ages of the Christian church. Where were the glory of so much invincible love and patience, if they had not been so put to it?

2dly. For the other argument, that the said *following of good* would preserve from *harm*, it speaks truly the nature of the thing, what it is apt to do, and what, in some measure, it often doth; but considering the nature of the world, *its enmity against God* and religion, that strong poison in the serpent's seed, it is not strange that it often proves otherwise; that, notwithstanding the righteous carriage of Christians, yea, even *because* of it, they suffer much. It is a resolved case. *All that will live godly, must suffer persecution*, 2 Tim. iii. 12. It meets a Christian in his entrance to the way of the Kingdom, and goes along all the way. No sooner canst thou begin to seek the way to heaven, but the world will seek how to vex and molest thee, and make that way grievous; if no other way, by scoffs and taunts, intended as bitter blasts to destroy the tender blossom or bud of religion, or, as Herod, to kill Christ newly-born. You shall no sooner begin to inquire after God, but, twenty to one, they will begin to inquire whether thou art gone mad. But if thou knowest *who it is whom thou hast trusted*, and whom thou lovest, this is a small matter. What though it were deeper and sharper sufferings, yet still, *if you suffer for righteousness, happy are you.*

Which is the IId thing that was proposed, and more particularly imports, 1. That a Christian under the heaviest load of sufferings



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for righteousness, is yet still *happy*, notwithstanding those sufferings. 2. That he is happier even by those sufferings. And,

1. All the sufferings and distresses of this world are not able to destroy the happiness of a Christian, nor to diminish it; yea, they can not at all touch it; it is out of their reach. If it were built on worldly enjoyments, then worldly privations and sufferings might shake it, yea, might undo it: when those rotten props fail, that which rests on them must fall. He that hath set his heart on his riches, a few hours can make him miserable. He that lives on popular applause, it is almost in anybody's power to rob him of his happiness; a little slight or disgrace undoes him. Or, whatsoever the soul fixes on of these moving unfixed things, pluck them from it, and it must cry after them, *Ye have taken away my gods*. But the believer's happiness is safe, out of the reach of shot. He may be impoverished, and imprisoned, and tortured, and killed, but this one thing is out of hazard: he can not be miserable; still, in the midst of all these, he subsists a happy man. If all friends be shut out, yet the visits of the Comforter may be frequent, bringing him glad tidings from heaven, and communing with him of the love of Christ and solacing him in that. It was a great word for a heathen to say of his false accusers, *Kill me they may, but they can not hurt me*. How much more confidently may the Christian say so! Banishment he fears not, for his country is above; nor death, for that sends him home into that country.

The believing soul having hold of Jesus Christ, can easily despise the best and the worst of the world, and defy all that is in it; can share with the apostle in that defiance which he gives: *I am persuaded that neither death nor life shall separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*, Rom. viii. *ult*. Yea, what though the frame of the world were a dissolving, and falling to pieces! This happiness holds, and is not stirred by it; for it is built upon that Rock of eternity, that stirs not, nor changes at all.

Our main work, truly, if you will believe it, is this; to provide this immoveable happiness, which amid all changes, and losses, and sufferings, may hold firm. You *may be free, choose it rather*—not to stand to the courtesy of anything about you, nor of any man, whether enemy or friend, for the tenure of your happiness. Lay it higher and surer, and if you be wise, provide such a peace as will remain untouched in the hottest flame, such a light as will shine in the deepest dungeon, and such a life as is safe even in death itself, that life which is *hid with Christ in God*. Col. iii. 3.

But if in other sufferings, even the worst and saddest, the believer is still a happy man then, more especially in those that are the best kind, sufferings for righteousness. Not only do they not detract from his happiness, but,

2. They concur and give accession to it: he is happy even so by suffering. As will appea from the following considerations.

[1.] It is the happiness of a Christian, unn he attain perfection, to be advancing toward it: to be daily refining from sin, and growing richer and stronger in the graces that make up a Christian, a new creature; to attain a higher degree of patience and meekness, and humility; to have the heart more weaned from the earth and fixed on heaven. Now, as other afflictions of the saints do help them in these, their sufferings for righteousness, the unrighteous and injurious dealings of the world with them have a particular fitness for this purpose. Those trials that come immediately from God's own hand, seem to bind to a patient and humble compliance, with more authority, and (I may say) necessity; there is no plea, no place for so much as a word, unless it be directly and expressly against the Lord's own dealing; but unjust suffering at the hands of men, requires that respect unto God (without whose hand they can not move), that for his sake, and for reverence and love to him, a Christian can go through those with that mild evenness of spirit which overcomes even in suffering.

And there is nothing outward more fit to persuade a man to give up with the world and its friendship, than to feel much of its enmity and malice, and that directly venting itself against religion, making that the very quarrel, which is of all things dearest to a Christian, and in the highest esteem with him.

If the world should caress them, and smile on them, they might be ready to forget their home, or at least to abate in the frequent thoughts and fervent desires of it, and to turn into some familiarity with the world, and favorable thoughts of it, so as to let out somewhat of their hearts after it; and thus, grace would grow faint by the diversion and calling forth of the spirits: as in summer, in the hottest and fairest weather, it is with the body.

It is an observation confirmed by the experience of all ages, that when the church flourished most in outward peace and wealth, it abated most of its spiritual lustre, which is its genuine and true beauty, *opibus major, virtutibus minor;* and when it seemed most miserable by persecutions and sufferings, it was most happy in sincerity, and zeal, and vigor of grace. When the moon shines brightest toward the earth, it is dark heavenward; and, on the contrary, when it appears not, it is nearest the sun, and clear toward heaven.

[2.] Persecuted Christians are happy in acting and evidencing, by those sufferings for God, their love to him. Love delights in difficulties, and grows in them. The more a Christian suffers for Christ, the more he loves him, and accounts him the dearer; and the more he loves him, still the more can he suffer for him.

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[3.] They are happy, as in testifying love to Christ and glorifying him, so in their conformity with him, which is love's ambition. Love affects likeness and harmony at any rate. A believer would readily take it as an affront, that the world should be kind to him, that was so harsh and cruel to his beloved Lord and master. Canst thou expect, or wouldst thou wish, smooth language from that world which reviled thy Jesus—which called him Beelzebub? Couldst thou own and accept friendship at its hands, which buffeted him, and shed his blood? Or, art thou not, rather, most willing to share with him, and of St. Paul's mind, *an ambassador in chains?* [Πρεσβευω εν αλυσει] *God forbid that I should glory in anything save in the cross of Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world*, Gal. vi. 14.

[4.] Suffering Christians are happy in the rich supplies of spiritual comfort and joy, which in those times of suffering are usual; so that as *their sufferings for Christ do abound, their consolations in him abound much more*, as the apostle testifies, 2 Cor. i. 5. God is speaking most peace to the soul when the world speaks most war and enmity against it; and this compensates abundantly. When the Christian lays the greatest sufferings men can inflict in the one balance, and the least glances of God's countenance in the other, he says, it is worth all the enduring of those to enjoy this: he says with David, Psalm cix. 28, *Let them curse, but bless thou:* let them frown, but smile thou. And thus God usually doth; he refreshes such as are prisoners for him, with visits which they would gladly buy again with the hardest restraints and debarring of nearest friends. The world can not but misjudge the state of suffering Christians; it sees, as St. Bernard speaks, their crosses, but not their anointings: *vident cruces nostras, unctiones non vident.* Was not Stephen, think you, in a happy posture even in his enemies' hands? Was he afraid of the showers of stones coming about his ears, who saw the heavens opened, and Jesus standing on the Father's right hand, so little troubled with their stoning of him, that, as the text hath it, in the midst of them *he fell asleep?* Acts vii. 60.

[5.] If those sufferings be so small, that they are weighed down even by present comforts, and so the Christian be happy in them in that regard, how much more doth the *weight of glory* that follows surpass these sufferings! They *are not worthy to come in comparison*, they are as nothing to that *glory that shall be revealed*, in the apostle's arithmetic; Rom. viii. 18 [λογιζομαι], when I have cast up the sum of the sufferings of this present time, this instant *now* [το νυν], they amount to just nothing in respect of that glory. Now, these sufferings are happy, because they are the way to this happiness, and pledges of it, and, if anything can do, they raise the very degree of it. However, it is an *exceeding excellent weight of glory.* The Hebrew word which signifies *glory*, signifies *weight.* Earthly glories are all *too light*, το ελαφρον, except in the weight of the cares and sorrows that attend them; but that hath the weight of complete blessedness. Speak not of all the sufferings, nor of all the prosperities of this poor life, nor of anything in it, as worthy of a thought, when *that glory* is named; yea, let not this life be called *life*, when we mention that other life, which our Lord, by his death, hath purchased for us.

*Be not afraid of their terror.*] No time, nor place in the world, is so favorable to religion, that it is not still needful to arm a Christian mind against the outward oppositions and discouragements he shall meet with in his way to heaven. This is the apostle's scope here; and he doth it, 1*st*, by an assertion; 2*dly*, by an exhortation: The assertion, that, in *suffering for righteousness*, they *are happy;* the exhortation, agreeably to the assertion, that *they fear not.* Why should they fear anything, who are assured of happiness, yea, who are the more happy by reason of those very things that seem most to be feared?

The words are in part borrowed from the Prophet Isaiah, who relates them as the Lord's words to him and other godly persons with him in that time, countermanding in them that carnal distrustful fear which drove a profane king and people to seek help rather anywhere than in God, who was their strength: *Fear not their fear, nor be afraid; but sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.* Isa. viii. 12, 13. This the apostle extends as a universal rule for Christians in the midst of their greatest troubles and dangers.

The things opposed here, are, a perplexing, troubling *fear of sufferings*, as the soul's distemper, and a *sanctifying of God in the heart*, as the sovereign cure of it, and the true principle of a healthful, sound constitution of mind.

Natural fear, though not evil in itself, yet, in the natural man, is constantly irregular and disordered in the actings of it, still missing its due object, or measure, or both; either running in a wrong channel, or overrunning the banks. As there are no pure elements to be found here in this lower part of the world, but only in the philosophers' books (who define them as pure, but they find them so nowhere), thus we may speak of our natural passions, as not sinful in their nature, yet in us who are naturally sinful, yea, full of sin, they can not escape the mixture and alloy of it.

Sin hath put the soul into universal disorder, so that it neither loves nor hates what it ought, nor as it ought; hath neither right joy, nor sorrow, nor hope, nor fear. A very small matter stirs and troubles it; and as waters that are stirred (so the word [ταραχθητε] signifies), having dregs in the bottom, become

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muddy and impure, thus the soul, by carnal fear, is confused, and there is neither quiet nor clearness in it. A *troubled sea*, as it *can not rest*, so, in its restlessness, it *casts up mire*, as the prophet speaks, Isa. lvii. 20. Thus it is with the unrenewed heart of man: the least blasts that arise, disturb it and make it restless, and its own impurity makes it cast up mire. Yea, it is never right with the natural man: either he is asleep in carnal confidence, or, being shaken out of that, he is hurried and tumbled to and fro with carnal fears: he is either in a lethargy, or in a fever, or trembling with ague. When troubles are at a distance, he is ready to fold his hands, and take his ease, as long as it may be; and then, being surprised when they come rushing on him, his sluggish ease is paid with a surcharge of perplexing and affrighting fears. And is not this the condition of the most?

Now, because these evils are not fully cured in the believer, but he is subject to carnal security (as David, *I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved*), and he is filled with undue fears and doubts in the apprehensions or feeling of trouble (as the psalmist likewise complaining, confesses the dejection and disquietness of his soul, and again, that he had almost lost his standing, *My feet had well slipped*), therefore it is very needful to caution them often with such words as these, *Fear not their fear, neither be ye troubled.* You may take it objectively, *their fear:* Be not afraid of the world's malice, or anything it can effect. Or it may be taken subjectively, as the prophet means: Do not you fear after the manner of the world; be not distrustfully troubled with any affliction that can befall you. Surely it is pertinent in either sense, or in both together: *Fear not what they can do, nor fear as they do.*

If we look on the condition of men, ourselves and others, are not the minds of the greatest part continually tossed, and their lives worn out between vain hopes and fears,* providing incessantly new matter of disquiet to themselves?

Contemplative men have always taken notice of this grand malady in our nature, and have attempted in many ways the cure of it, have bestowed much pains in seeking out prescriptions and rules for the attainment of a settled tranquillity of spirit, free from the fears and troubles that perplex us; but they have proved but mountebanks, who give big words enough, and do little or nothing—*all physicians of no value*, or of nothing, good for nothing, as Job speaks. Job xiii. 4. Some things they have said well concerning the outward causes of the inward evil, and of the inefficacy of inferior outward things to help it; but they have not descended to the bottom and inward cause of this our wretched unquiet condition; much less have they ascended to the true and only remedy of it. In this, Divine light is needful, and here we have it in the following verse:—

* Haec inter dubii vivimus et morimur.

VER. 15. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you, a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.

IMPLYING the cause of all our fears and troubles to be this, our ignorance and disregard of God; and the due knowledge and acknowledgment of him, to be the only establishment and strength of the mind.

In the words we may consider these three things: 1. This respect of God, as it is here expressed, *Sanctify the Lord God.* 2. The seat of it, *In your hearts.* 3. The fruit of it, the power that this sanctifying of God in the heart hath, to rid that heart of those fears and troubles to which it is here opposed as their proper remedy.

*Sanctify the Lord God.*] He is holy, most holy, the fountain of holiness. It is he, he alone, who powerfully sanctifies us, and then, and not till then, we sanctify him. When he hath made us holy, we know and confess him to be holy, we worship and serve our holy God, we glorify him with our whole souls and all our affections. We sanctify him by acknowledging his greatness and power, and goodness, and (which is here more particularly intended) we do this by a holy fear of him, and faith in him. These within us confess his greatness, and power, and goodness: as the prophet is express, *Sanctify him, and let him be your fear and your dread*, Isa. viii. 13; and then he adds, If thus you sanctify him, you shall further sanctify him. *He shall be your sanctuary:* you shall account him so, in believing in him, and shall find him so, in his protecting you; you shall repose on him for safety. And these particularly cure the heart of undue fears.

*In your hearts.*] We are to be sanctified in our words and actions, but primarily in our hearts, as the root and principle of the rest. He *sanctifies* his own *throughout*, makes their language and their lives holy, but first, and most of all, their hearts. And as he chiefly sanctifies the heart, it chiefly sanctifies him; acknowledges and worships him often when the tongue and body do not, and possibly can not well join with it: it fears, and loves, and trusts in him, which properly the outward man can not do, though it does follow and is acted on by these affections, and so shares in them according to its capacity.

Beware of an external, superficial sanctifying of God, for he accepts it not; he will interpret that a profaning of him and his name. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked.* Gal. vi. 7. He looks through all visages and appearances, in upon the heart; sees how it entertains him, and stands affected to him; whether it be possessed with reverence and love, more than either thy tongue or carriage can express. And if it be not so, all thy seeming worship is but injury, and thy speaking of

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him is but babbling, be thy discourse never so excellent; yea, the more thou hast seemed to sanctify God, while thy heart hath not been chief in the business, thou shalt not, by such service, have the less, but the more fear and trouble in the day of trouble, when it comes upon thee. No estate is so far off from true consolation, and so full of horrors, as that of the rotten-hearted hypocrite: his rotten heart is so never shaken to pieces than any other. If you would have heart-peace in God, you must have this heart-sanctifying of him. It is the heart that is vexed and troubled with fears, the disease is there; and if the prescribed remedy reach not thither, it will do no good. But let your hearts sanctify him, and then he shall fortify and establish your hearts.

This sanctifying of God in the heart, composes the heart, and frees it from fears.

First, In general, the turning of the heart to consider and regard God, takes it off from those vain, empty, windy things, that are the usual causes and matter of its fears. It feeds on wind, and therefore the bowels are tormented within. The heart is subject to disturbance, because it lets out itself to such things, and lets in such things into itself, as are ever in motion, and full of instability and restlessness; and so, it can not be at quiet, till God come in and cast out these, and keep the heart within, that it wander out no more to them.

Secondly, Fear and faith in the believer, more particularly in this.

1. That fear, as greatest, overtops and nullifies all lesser fears: the heart possessed with this fear, hath no room for the other. It resolves the heart, in point of duty, what it should and must do, that it must not offend God by any means, lays that down as indisputable, and so eases it of doubtings and debates in that kind—whether shall I comply with the world, and abate somewhat of the sincerity and exact way of religion to please men, or to escape persecution or reproaches: no, it is unquestionably best, and only necessary *to obey him rather than men*, to retain his favor, be it with displeasing the most respected and considerable persons we know; yea, rather to choose the universal and highest displeasure of all the world for ever, than his smallest discountenance for a moment. It counts that the only indispensable necessity, to cleave unto God, and obey him. If I pray, I shall be accused, might Daniel think, but yet, pray I must, come on it what will. So, if I worship God in my prayer, they will mock me, I shall pass for a fool; no matter for that, it must be done: I must call on God, and strive to walk with him. This sets the mind at ease, not to be halting between two opinions, but resolved what to do. *We are not careful*, said they, *to answer thee, O king—our God can deliver us*, but if not, this we have put out of deliberation, *we will not worship the image*. Dan. iii. 16. As one said, *Non oportet vivere, sed oportet navigare*, so we may say, It is not necessary to have the favor of the world, nor to have riches, nor to live, but it is necessary to hold fast the truth, and to walk holily, to sanctify the name of our Lord, and honor him, whether in life or death.

2. Faith in God clears the mind, and dispels carnal fears. It is the most sure help: *What time I am afraid*, says David, *I will trust in thee*. Psalm lvi. 3. It resolves the mind concerning the event, and scatters the multitude of perplexing thoughts which arise about that: What shall become of this and that? What if such an enemy prevail? What if the place of our abode grow dangerous, and we be not provided, as others are, for a removal? No matter, says faith, though all fail, I know of one thing that will not; I have a refuge which all the strength of nature and art can not break in upon or demolish, *a high defence, my rock in whom I trust*. Psalm lxii. 5, 6. The firm belief of, and resting on his power, and wisdom, and love, gives a clear satisfying answer to all doubts and fears. It suffers us not to stand to jangle with each trifling, grumbling objection, but carries all before it, makes day in the soul, and so chases away those fears that vex us only in the dark, as affrightful fancies do. This is indeed *to sanctify God*, and to give him his own glory, to *rest on him*. And it is a fruitful homage which is thus done to him, returning us so much peace and victory over fears and troubles, in the persuasion that nothing *can separate from his love;* that only we feared, and so, the things that can not reach that, can be easily despised.

Seek to have the Lord in your hearts, and sanctify him there. He shall make them strong, and carry them through all dangers. *Though I walk*, says David, *through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no ill, for thou art with me*. Ps. xxiii. So xxvii. 1. What is it that makes the church so firm and stout: *Though the sea roar, and the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea, yet we will not fear?* It is this: *God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved*. Ps. xlvi. 2, 5. No wonder; he is immovable, and therefore doth establish all where he resides. If the world be in the middle of the heart, it will be often shaken, for all there is continual motion and change; but God in it, keeps it stable. Labor, therefore, to get God into your hearts, residing in the midst of them, and then, in the midst of all conditions, they shall not move.

Our condition is universally exposed to fears and troubles, and no man is so stupid but he studies and projects for some fence against them, some bulwark to break the incursion of evils, and so to bring his mind to some ease, ridding it of the fear of them. Thus the most vulgar spirits do in their way; for even the brutes, from whom such do not much differ in their actings, and course of

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life too, are instructed by nature to provide themselves and their young ones with shelter, the birds their nests, and the beasts their holes and dens. Thus, men gape and pant after gain with a confused ill-examined fancy of quiet and safety in it, if once they might reach such a day, as to say with the rich fool in the gospel, *Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years;* though warned by his short ease, and by many watchwords, yea, by daily experience, that days may come, yea, one day will, when fear and trouble shall rush in, and break over the highest tower of riches; that there is a day, called the *day of wrath*, wherein they *profit not at all.* Prov. xi. 4. Thus, men seek safety in the greatness, or multitude, or supposed faithfulness of friends; they seek by any means to be strongly underset this way, to have many and powerful, and trust-worthy friends. But wiser men, perceiving the unsafety and vanity of these and all external things, have cast about for some higher course. They see a necessity of withdrawing a man from externals, which do nothing but mock and deceive those most who trust most to them; but they can not tell whither to direct him. The best of them bring him *into himself*, and think to quiet him so, but the truth is, he finds as little to support him there; there is nothing truly strong enough within him, to hold out against the many sorrows and fears which still from without do assault him. So then, though it is well done, to call off a man from outward things, as moving sands, that he build not on them, yet this is not enough; for his own spirit is as unsettled a piece as is in all the world, and must have some higher strength than its own, to fortify and fix it. This is the way that is here taught, *Fear not their fear, but sanctify the Lord your God in your hearts;* and if you can attain this latter, the former will follow of itself.

In the general, then, God taking the place formerly possessed by things full of motion and unquietness, makes firm and establishes the heart. More particularly,

On the one hand, the fear of God turns other fears out of doors: there is no room for them where this great fear is; and though greater than they all, yet, it disturbs not as they do, yea, it brings as great quiet as they brought trouble. It is an ease to have but one thing for the heart to deal withal, for many times the multitude of carnal fears is more troublesome than their weight, as flies that vex most by their number.

Again, this fear is not a terrible apprehension of God as an enemy, but a sweet composed reverence of God as our King, yea, as our Father; as very great, but no less good than great; so highly esteeming his favor, as fearing most of all things to offend him in any kind; especially if the soul should either have been formerly, on the one hand, under the lash of his apprehended displeasure, or, on the other side, have had some sensible tastes of his love, and have been entertained in his *banqueting house*, where *his banner over it was love.* Cant. ii. 4.

His children fear him for his goodness: are afraid to lose sight of that, or, to deprive themselves of any of its influences; desire to live in his favor, and then, for other things they are not very thoughtful.

On the other hand, faith carries the soul above all doubts, assures it that if sufferings, or sickness, or death come, nothing can separate it from him. This suffices; yea, what though he may hide his face for a time, though that is the hardest of all, yet there is no separation. Faith sets the soul in God, and where is safety, if it be not there? It rests on those persuasions it hath concerning him, and that interest it hath in him. Faith believes that he sits and rules the affairs of the world, with an all-seeing eye and an all-moving hand. The greatest affairs surcharge him not, and the very smallest escape him not. He orders the march of all armies, and the events of battles, and yet, thou and thy particular condition slip not out of his view. The very *hairs of thy head are numbered;* are not then all thy steps, and the hazards of them, known to him, and all thy desires before him? Doth he not *number thy wanderings*, every weary step thou art driven to, and *put thy tears in his bottle?* Psalm lvii. 8. Thou mayest assure thyself, that however thy matters seem to go, all is contrived to subserve thy good, especially thy chief and highest good. There is a regular motion in them, though the wheels do seem to run cross. *All these things are against me*, said old Jacob, and yet, they were all for him.

In all estates, I know of no heart's ease, but to believe; to sanctify and honor thy God, in resting on his word. If thou art not persuaded of this love, surely that will carry thee above all distrustful fears. If thou art not clear in that point, yet depend and resolve to stay by him, yea, to stay on him, till he show himself unto thee. Thou hast some fear of him; thou canst not deny it without gross injury to him and thyself: thou wouldst willingly walk in all well-pleasing unto him: well then, *who is among you that feareth the Lord, though he see no* present *light, yet, let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.* Isa. l. 10. Press this upon thy soul, for there is not such another charm for all its fears and disquiet; therefore, repeat it still with David, sing this still, till it be stilled, and chide thy distrustful heart into believing: *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him.* Psalm xlii. 5. Though I am all out of tune for the present, never a right string in my soul, yet, he will put forth his hand and redress all, and I *shall yet once again praise*, and therefore, even now, I will hope.

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It is true, some may say, God is a safe shelter and refuge, but he is holy, and holy men may find admittance and protection, but can so vile a sinner as I look to be protected and taken in under his safe-guard? Go try. *Knock* at his door, *and* (take it not on our word, but on his own) *it shall be opened to thee;* that once done, thou shalt have a happy life of it in the worst times. Faith hath this privilege, never to be ashamed; it takes sanctuary in God, and sits and sings *under the shadow of his wings*, as David speaks. Psalm lxiii. 7.

Whence the unsettledness of men's minds in trouble, or when it is near, but because they are far off from God? The heart is shaken as the leaves of the tree with the wind, there is no stability of spirit; God is not sanctified in it, and no wonder, for he is not known. Strange this ignorance of God, and of the precious promises of his word! The most, living and dying strangers to him! When trouble comes, they have not him *as a known refuge*, but have to begin to seek after him, and to inquire the way to him; they can not go to him as acquainted, and engaged by his own covenant with them. Others have some empty knowledge, and can discourse of Scripture, and sermons, and spiritual comforts, while yet they have none of that fear and trust which quiet the soul: they have notions of God in their heads, but God is not sanctified in their hearts.

If you will be advised, this is the way to have a high and strong spirit indeed, and to be above troubles and fears: seek for a more lively and divine knowledge of God than most as yet have, and rest not till you bring him into your hearts, and then you shall rest indeed in him.

Sanctify him by fearing him. *Let him be your fear and your dread*, not only as to outward, gross offences; fear an oath, fear to profane the Lord's holy day, but fear also all irregular earthly desires; fear the distempered affecting of anything, the entertaining of anything in the secret of your hearts, that may give distaste to your beloved. Take heed, respect the great Person you have in your company, who lodges within you, the Holy Spirit. *Grieve him not;* it will turn to your own grief if you do, for all your comfort is in his hand, and flows from him. If you be but in heart dallying with sin, it will unfit you for suffering outward troubles, and make your spirit low and base in the day of trial; yea, it will fill you with inward trouble, and disturb that peace which, I am sure, you who know it esteem more than all the peace and flourishing of this world. Outward troubles do not molest or stir inward peace, but an unholy, unsanctified affection doth. All the winds without, cause not an earthquake, but that within its own bowels doth. Christians are much their own enemies in unwary walking; hereby they deprive themselves of those comforts they might have in God, and so are often almost as perplexed and full of fears, upon small occasions, as worldlings are.

Sanctify him by believing. Study the main question, your *reconcilement* with him; labor to bring that to some point, and then, in all other occurrences, Faith will uphold you, by enabling you to rely on God as now yours. For these three things make up the soul's peace: 1*st*, To have right apprehensions of God, looking on him in Christ, and according to that covenant that holds in him. And, 2*dly*, A particular apprehension, that is, laying hold on him in that covenant as gracious and merciful, as satisfied and appeased in Christ, smelling in his sacrifice (which was himself), a savor of rest, and setting himself before me, that I may rely on him in that notion. 3*dly*, A persuasion, that by so relying on him, my soul is as one, yea, is one with him. Yet, while this is wanting, as to a believer it may be, the other is our duty, to sanctify the Lord in believing the word of grace, and believing on him, reposing on his word. And this, even severed from the other, doth deliver, in a good measure, from distracting fears and troubles, and sets the soul at safety.

Whence is it, that in times of persecution or trouble, men are troubled within, and racked with fears, but because, instead of depending upon God, their hearts are glued to such things as are in hazard by those troubles without, their estates, or their ease, or their lives? The soul destitute of God esteems so highly these things, that it can not but exceedingly feel when they are in danger, and fear their loss most, gaping after some imagined good: Oh! if I had but this, I were well:—but then, such or such a thing may step in and break all my projects. And this troubles the poor spirit of the man who hath no higher designs than such as are so easily blasted, and still, as anything in man lifts up his soul to *vanity*, it must needs fall down again into *vexation*. There is a word or two in the Hebrew for *idols*, that signify withal *troubles*,* and *terrors*.† And so it is certainly: all our idols prove so to us; they fill us with nothing but anguish and troubles, with unprofitable cares and fears, that are good for nothing, but to be fit punishments of that folly out of which they arise. The ardent love or self-willed desire of prosperity, or wealth, or credit in the world, carries with it, as inseparably tied to it, a bundle of fears and inward troubles. *They that will be rich*, says the apostle, *fall into a snare, and many noisome and hurtful lusts*, and, as he adds in the next verse, *they pierce themselves through with many sorrows*. 1 Tim. vi. 9. He who hath set his heart upon an estate, or a commodious dwelling and lands, or upon a healthful and long

* [*Tigirim*], Isa. xlv. 16, from [*Tsrus*], arctavit, hostiliter egit.

† [*Miphletzeth*], 1 Kings xv. 13, from [*Phalatz*], contremiscere, et [*Emim*], Job xv. 25, from [*Aim*], formidabilis, terrificus.

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life, can not but be in continued alarms, renewing his fears concerning them. Especially in troublous times, the least rumor of anything that threateneth to deprive him of those advantages, strikes him to the heart, because his heart is in them. I am well seated, thinks he, and I am of a sound, strong constitution, and may have many a good day. Oh! but besides the arrows of pestilence that are flying round about, the sword of a cruel enemy is not far off. This will affright and trouble a heart void of God. But if thou wouldst readily answer and dispel all these, and such like fears, *sanctify the Lord God in thy heart.* The soul that eyes God, renounces these things, looks on them at a great distance, as things far from the heart, and which therefore can not easily trouble it, but it looks on God as within the heart, *sanctifies him in it,* and rests on him.

The word of God cures the many foolish hopes and fears that we are naturally subject to, by representing to us hopes and fears of a far higher nature, which swallow up and drown the other, as inundations and landfloods do the little ditches in those meadows that they overflow. *Fear not,* says our Savior, *him that can kill the body*—What then? Fear must have some work: he adds, *But fear him who can kill both soul and body.* Thus, in the passage cited here, *Fear not their fear, but sanctify the Lord, and let him be your fear and your dread.* And so, as for the hopes of the world, care not though you lose them for God: there is a *hope in you* (as it follows here) that is far above them.

*Be ready always to give an answer.*] The real Christian is *all for Christ,* hath given up all right of himself to his Lord and Master, to be all his, to do and suffer for him, and, therefore, he surely will not fail in this which is least, to speak for him upon all occasions. If he sanctify him in his heart, the tongue will follow, *and be ready* [πρὸς ἀπολογίαν] *to give an answer,* a defence or apology. Of this, here are four things to be noted.

1*st.* The need of it, *Men will ask an account.*

2*dly.* The matter or subject of it, *The hope in you.*

3*dly.* The manner, *With meekness and fear.*

4*thly.* The faculty for it, *Be ready.*

1. The need of a defence or apology. Religion is always the thing in the world that hath the greatest calumnies and prejudices cast upon it: and this engages those who love it, to endeavor to clear and disburden it of them. This they do chiefly by the course of their lives. The saints, by their blameless actions and patient sufferings, do write most real and convincing *Apologies,* yet sometimes it is expedient, yea, necessary, to add verbal defences, and to vindicate not so much themselves, as their Lord and his truth, as suffering in the reproaches cast upon them. Did they rest in their own persons, a regardless contempt of them were usually the fittest answer; *Spreta vilescerent.* But where the holy profession of Christians is likely to receive either the main or the indirect blow, and a word of defence may do anything to ward it off, there we ought not to spare to do it.

Christian prudence goes a great way in the regulating of this; for holy things are not to be cast to dogs. Some are not capable of receiving rational answers, especially in divine things; they were not only lost upon them, but religion dishonored by the contest. But we are to answer every one that *inquires a reason,* or an account; which supposes something receptive of it. We ought to judge ourselves engaged to give it, be it an enemy, if he will hear; if it gain him not, it may in part convince and cool him; much more, should it be one who ingenuously inquires for satisfaction, and possibly inclines to receive the truth, but is prejudiced against it by false misrepresentations of it; for Satan and the profane world are very inventive of such shapes and colors as may make truth most odious, drawing monstrous misconsequences out of it, and belying the practices of Christians, making their assemblies horrible and vile by false imputations; and thus are they often necessitated to declare the true tenor, both of their belief and their lives, in confessions of faith, and remonstrances of their carriage and custom.

The very name of Christians, in the primitive times, was made hateful by the foulest aspersions of strange wickednesses committed in their meetings; and these passed credibly through with all who were not particularly acquainted with them. Thus it also was with the Waldenses; and so, both were forced to publish Apologies. And, as here enjoined, every one is bound seasonably to clear himself, and his brethren, and religion: *Be ye always ready.* It is not always to be done to every one, but being ready to do it, we must consider when, and to whom, and how far. But,

2. All that they are to give account of is comprised here under this, *The hope that is in you.* Faith is the root of all graces, of all obedience and holiness; and hope is so near in nature to it, that the one is commonly named for the other; for the things that *faith* apprehends and lays hold on as present, in the truth of divine promises, *hope* looks out for as to come, in their certain performance. To believe a promise to be true before it be performed, is no other than to believe that it shall be performed: and hope expects that.

Many rich and excellent things do the saints receive, even in their mean despised condition here; but their *hope* is rather mentioned as the subject they may speak and give account of with most advantage, both because all they receive, at present, is but as nothing, compared to what they hope for, and because, such as it is, it can not be made

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known at all to a natural man, being so clouded with their afflictions and sorrows. These he sees, but their graces and comforts he can not see; and, therefore, the very ground of higher hopes, of somewhat to come, though he knows not what it is, speaks more satisfaction. To hear of another life, and a happiness hoped for, any man will confess it says something, and deserves to be considered.

So, then, the whole sum of religion goes under this word, *the hope that is in you*, for two reasons: first, for that it doth indeed all resolve and terminate into things to come, and secondly, as it leads and carries on the soul toward them by all the graces in it, and all the exercise of them, and through all services and sufferings; aiming at this, as its main scope, to keep that life to come in the believer's eye, till he get it in his hand; to sustain the hope of it, and bring him to possess it. Therefore the apostle calls faith, *the substance of things hoped for*, that which makes them be before they be, gives a solidity and substance to them. The name of *hope*, in other things, scarcely suits with such a meaning, but sounds a kind of uncertainty, and is somewhat airy; for, of all other hopes but this, it is a very true word of Seneca's, *Spes est nomen boni incerti: Hope is the name of an uncertain good.* But the gospel, being entertained by faith, furnishes a hope that hath substance and reality in it; and all its truths do concentrate into this, to give such a hope. There was in St. Paul's word, besides the fitness for his stratagem at that time, a truth suitable to this, where he designates his whole cause for which he was called in question, by the name of his *hope of the resurrection.* Acts xxiii. 6.

And, indeed, this hope carries its own apology in it, both for itself and for religion. What can more pertinently answer all exceptions against the way of godliness than this, to represent what hopes the saints have who walk in that way? If you ask, Whither tends all this your preciseness and singularity? Why can not you live as your neighbors and the rest of the world about you? Truly, the reason is this; we have somewat further to look to than our present condition, and far more considerable than anything here; we have a hope of blessedness after time, a hope to dwell in the presence of God, where our Lord Christ is gone before us; and we know that *as many as have this hope must purify themselves even as he is pure.* 1 John iii. 3. The city we tend to is holy, and *no unclean thing shall enter into it.* Rev. xxi. 17. The hopes we have can not subsist in the way of the ungodly world; they can not breathe in that air, but are choked and stifled with it; and therefore we must take another way, unless we will forego our hopes, and ruin ourselves for company. But all that bustle of godliness you make, is (say you) but ostentation and hypocrisy. That may be your judgment, but, if it were so, we had but a poor bargain. Such persons *have their reward;* that which they desire, *to be seen of men*, is given them, and they can look for no more; but we should be loath to have it so with us. That which our eye is upon, is to come; our hopes are the thing which upholds us. We know that we shall appear before the Judge of hearts, where shows and formalities will not pass, and we are persuaded that *the hope of the hypocrite shall perish:* Job viii. 13: no man shall be so much disappointed and ashamed as he. But the *hope* that we have, *maketh not ashamed.* Rom. v. 5. And while we consider that, so far are we from the regarding of men's eyes, that, were it not we are bound to profess our hope, and avow religion, and to walk conformably to it, even before men, we would be content to pass through altogether unseen: and we desire to pass as if it were so, as regardless either of the approbation, or of the reproaches and mistakes of men, as if there were no such thing, for it is indeed nothing.

Yea, the hopes we have make all things sweet. Therefore, do we go through disgraces and sufferings with patience, yea, with joy, because of that hope of glory and joy laid up for us. A Christian can *take joyfully the spoiling of his goods, knowing that he hath in heaven a better and an enduring substance.* Heb. x. 34.

*The hope.*] All the estate of a believer lieth in hope, and it is a royal estate. As for outward things, the children of God have what he thinks fit to serve them, but those are not their portion, and therefore he gives often more of the world to those who shall have no more hereafter; but all their flourish and lustre is but a base advantage, as a lackey's gaudy clothes, which usually make more show than his who is heir of the estate. How often, under a mean outward condition, and very despicable every way, goes an heir of glory *born of God*, and so royal; born to a *crown that fadeth not*, an estate of hopes, but so rich and so certain hopes, that the least thought of them surpasses all the world's possessions! Men think of somewhat for the present, *a bird in hand*, as you say, the best of it: but the odds is in this, that when all present things shall be past and swept away, as if they had not been, then shall these hopers be in eternal possession; *they* only shall have all for ever, who seemed to have little or nothing here.

Oh! how much happier to be the meanest expectant of the glory to come, than the sole possessor of all this world. These expectants are often kept short in earthly things, and, had they the greatest abundance of them, yet they can not rest in that. Even so, all the spiritual blessings that they do possess here are nothing to *the hope that is in them*, but as an earnest-penny to their great inheritance, which, indeed, confirms their hope, and assures unto them that full estate; and therefore, be it never so small, they may look on



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it with joy, not so much regarding it simply in itself, as in relation to that which it seals and ascertains the soul of. Be it never so small, yet it is a pledge of the great glory and happiness which we desire to share in.

It is the grand comfort of a Christian, to look often beyond all that he can possess or attain here; and as to answer others, when he is put to it concerning his hope, so to *answer himself* concerning all his present griefs and wants: I have a poor traveller's lot here, little friendship and many straits, but yet I may go cheerfully homeward, for thither I shall come, and there I have riches and honor enough, a palace and a crown abiding me. Here, nothing but *depth calling unto depth*, one calamity and trouble, as waves, following another: but I have a hope of that *rest that remaineth for the people of God*. I feel the infirmities of a mortal state, but my hopes of immortality content me under them. I find strong and cruel assaults of temptations breaking in upon me, but, for all that, I have the assured hope of a full victory, and then, of everlasting peace. *I find a law in my members* rebelling against *the law of my mind*, which is the worst of all evils, so much strength of corruption within me; yet, there is withal a hope within me of deliverance, and I look over all to that: *I lift up my head, because the day of my redemption draws nigh*. This I dare avow and proclaim to all, and am not ashamed *to answer* concerning this blessed hope.

3. But for the manner of this, it is to be done with *meekness and fear;* meekness toward men, and reverential fear toward God.

*With meekness.*] A Christian is not, therefore, to be blustering and flying out into invectives, because he hath the better of it, against a man that questions him touching this hope; as some think themselves certainly authorized to rough speech, because they plead for truth, and are on its side. On the contrary, so much the rather study meekness, for the glory and advantage of the truth. It needs not the service of passion; yea, nothing so disserves it, as passion when set to serve it. The *spirit of truth* is withal the *spirit of meekness*. The dove that rested on that great champion of truth, who is the truth itself, is from him derived to the lovers of truth, and they ought to seek the participation of it. Imprudence makes some kind of Christians lose much of their labor, in speaking for religion, and drive those further off, whom they would draw into it.

*And fear.*] Divine things are never to be spoken of in a light, perfunctory way, but with a reverent, grave temper of spirit; and, for this reason, some choice is to be made both of time and persons. The confidence that attends this hope, makes the believer not fear men, to whom he answers, but still he fears his God, for whom he answers, and whose interest is chief in those things he speaks of. The soul that hath the deepest sense of spiritual things, and the truest knowledge of God, is most afraid to miscarry in speaking of him, most tender and wary how to acquit itself when engaged to speak of and for God.

4. We have the faculty for this apology, *be ready*. In this are implied knowledge, and affection, and courage. As for knowledge, it is not required of every Christian, to be able to prosecute subtilties, and encounter the sophistry of adversaries, especially in obscure points; but all are bound to know so much as to be able to aver that hope that is in them, the main doctrine of grace and salvation, wherein the most of men are lamentably ignorant. Affection sets all on work; whatever faculty the mind hath, it will not suffer it to be useless, and it hardens it against hazards in defence of the truth.

But the only way so to know and love the truth, and to have courage to avow it, is, to have the Lord *sanctified in the heart*. Men may dispute stoutly against Popery and errors, and yet be strangers to God and this hope. But surely it is the liveliest defence, and that which alone returns comfort within, when it arises from the peculiar interest of the soul in God, and in those truths and that hope which are questioned: it is then like pleading for the nearest friend, and for a man's own rights and inheritance. This will animate and give edge to it, when you apologise, not for a hope you have heard or read of barely, but for a hope *within you;* not merely a hope in believers in general, but in *you*, by a particular sense of that hope within.

But, although you should find it not so strong in you, as to your particular interest, yet are you seeking after it, and desiring it mainly? Is it your chief design to attain unto it? Then forbear not, if you have occasion, to speak for it, and commend it to others, and to maintain the sweetness and certainty of it.

And, to the end you may be the more established in it, and so the stronger to answer for it, not only against men, but against that great adversary who seeks so much to infringe and overbear it, know the right foundation of it; build it never on yourselves, or anything in yourselves. The work of grace may evidence to you the truth of your hope, but the ground it fastens on is Jesus Christ, in whom all our rights and evidences hold good; his death assuring us of freedom from condemnation, and his life and possession of glory being the foundation of our hope. Heb. vi. 19. If you would have it immovable, rest it there; lay all this hope on him, and, when assaulted, fetch all your answers for it from him, for it is *Christ in you*, that is your *hope of glory*. Col. i. 27.

VER. 16. Having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

THE *prosperity of fools is their destruction*, says Solomon, Prov. i. 32. But none

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of God's children die of this disease—of too much ease. He knows well how to breed them, and fit them for a kingdom. He keeps them in exercise, but yet so as they are not surcharged. He not only directs them how to overcome, but enables and supports them in all their conflicts, and gives them victory. One main thing, tending to their support and victory, is what is here required in the saints, and is withal wrought and maintained in them by the Spirit of God, *having a good conscience*, &c.

1. We have here two parties opposed in contest—the evil tongues of the ungodly, and the good conscience and conversation of the Christian: *they speak evil of you, and falsely accuse you*, but do you have *a good conscience*.

II. The success of their contest: the good conscience prevails, and the evil-speakers are ashamed.

I. The parties engaged: *they speak evil.*] This is a general evil in the corrupt nature of man, though in some it rises to a greater height than in others. Are not tables and chambers, and almost all societies and meetings full of it? And even those who have some dislikings of it, are too easily carried away with the stream, and, for company's sake, take a share, if not by lending their word, yet lending their ear, and willingly hearing the detractions of others; unless it be of their friends, or such as they have interest in, they insensibly slide into some forced complacency, and easily receive the impression of calumnies and defamings. But the most are more active in this evil, can cast in their penny to make up the shot; have their taunt or criticism upon somebody in readiness, to make up the feast, such as most companies entertain one another withal, but is a vile diet. Satan's name, as the Syriac calls him, is, *an eater of calumnies*. This tongue-evil hath its root in the heart, in a perverse constitution there, in pride and self-love. An overweening esteem that men naturally have of themselves, mounts them into the censor's chair, gives them a fancied authority of judging others, and self-love, a desire to be esteemed; and, for that end, they spare not to depress others, and load them with disgraces and injurious censures, seeking upon their ruins to raise themselves: as Sallust speaks, *Ex alieni nominis jactura gradum sibi faciunt ad gloriam.*

But this bent of the unrenewed heart and tongue to evil-speaking, works and vents in the world, most against those who walk most contrary to the course of the world; against such, this furnace of the tongue, *kindled from hell*, as St. James tells us, is made seven times hotter than ordinary. As for sincere Christians, they say, A company of hypocrites, Who so godly? but yet they are false, and malicious, and proud, &c. No kind of carriage in them shall escape, but there shall be some device to wrest and misname it. If they be cheerful in society, that shall be accounted more liberty than suits with their profession; if of a graver or sad temper, that shall pass for sullen severity. Thus perversely were John the Baptist and Christ censured by the Jews. Matt. xi. 18, 19. If they be diligent and wary in their affairs, then, in the world's construction, they are as covetous and worldly as any; if careless and remiss in them, then, silly, witless creatures, good for nothing. Still something stands cross.

The enemies of religion have not anywhere so quick an eye, as in observing the ways of such *as seek after God: my remarkers*, David calls them, Psalm lvi. 6—they who scan my ways, as the word implies—will not let the least step pass unexamined. If nothing be found faulty, then their invention works, either forging complete falsehoods, or disguising something that lies open to mistake. Or, if they can catch hold on any real failing, there is no end of their triumph and insultations.

1. They aggravate and raise it to the highest. 2. While they will not admit to be themselves judged of by their constant walk, they scruple not to judge of the condition of a Christian by any one particular action wherein he doth, or seems at least to, miscarry. 3. They rest not there, but make one failing of one Christian a reproach of all: "Take up your devotees, there is never a one of them better." 4. Nor rest they there, but make the personal failings of those who profess it, the disgrace of religion itself. Now, all these are very crooked rules, and such as use them are guilty of gross injustice. For,

1. There is a great difference between a thing taken favorably, and the same action misconstrued. And,

2. A great difference between one particular act, and a man's estate or inward frame, which they either consider not, or willingly or maliciously neglect.

3. How large is the difference that there is between one and another in the measure of grace, as well as of prudence, either in their natural disposition, or in grace, or possibly in both! Some who are honest in the matter of religion, yet, being very weak, may miscarry in such things as other Christians come seldom near the hazard of. And though some should wholly forsake the way of godliness, wherein they seemed to walk, yet why should that reflect upon such as are real and steadfast in it? *They went out from us*, says the apostle, *but were not of us*, 1 John ii. 19. *Offences* of this kind *must* be, but the *wo* rests on him by *whom they come*, not on other Christians. And if it spread further than the party offending, the wo is to the profane world, that take offence at religion because of him: as our Savior hath expressed it, *Wo to the world because of offences*, Matt. xviii. 7; they shall stumble and fall, and break

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their necks upon these stumbling-blocks or scandals. Thou who art profane, and seest the failing of a minister or Christian, and art hardened by it, this is a judgment to thee, that thou meetest with such a block in thy way. *Wo to the world!* It is a judgment on a place, when God permits religion, in the persons of some, to be scandalous.

4. Religion itself remains still the same: whatsoever be the failings and blots of one or more who profess it, it is itself pure and spotless. If it teach not holiness, and meekness, and humility, and all good, purely, then, except against it. But if it be *a straight golden reed* by which the temple is measured (Rev. xxi. 15), then let it have its own esteem, both of straightness and preciousness, whatsoever unevenness be found in those who profess to receive it.

Suspect and search yourselves, even in general, for this evil of evil-speaking. Consider that we are to give [λογον λογῶν] *an account of words;* and if of idle [ἀργον ῥῆμα] workless words, how much more of lying or biting words!—*De verbo mendaci aut mordaci,* as St. Bernard has it. Learn more humility and self-censure. Blunt that fire-edge upon your own hard and disordered hearts, that others may meet with nothing but charity and lenity at your hands.

But particularly beware of this, in more or less, in earnest or in jest, to reproach religion, or those who profess it. Know how particularly the glorious name of GOD is interested in that; and they who dare be affronting him, what shall they say? How shall they stand, when he calls them to account? If you have not attained to it, yet do not bark against it, but the rather esteem highly of religion. Love it, and the very appearance of it, wherever you find it. Give it respect and your good word, at least; and, from an external approbation, oh! that you would aspire to an inward acquaintance with it, and then no more were needful to be said in this; it would commend itself to you sufficiently. But, in the meantime, be ashamed, be afraid of that professed enmity against God that is among you, a malignant, hateful spirit against those who desire to walk holily, whetting your tongues against them.

Consider, what do you mean? This religion which we all profess, is it the way to heaven, or is it not? Do you believe this word, or not? If you do not, what do you here? If you do, then you must believe, too, that those who walk closest by this rule are surest in that way; those who dare not share in your oaths, and excessive cups, and profane conversation. What can you say? It is not possible to open your mouth against them, without renouncing this word and faith: therefore, either declare you are no Christians, and that Christ is not yours, or, in his name, I enjoin you, that you dare no more speak an ill word of Christianity, and the power of religion, and those who seek after it. There are not many higher signs of a reprobate mind, than to have a bitter, virulent spirit against the children of God. Seek that tie of affection and fraternity, on which the beloved apostle, St. John, lays such stress, when he says, *Hereby we know that we are translated from death to life, because we love the brethren.* 1 John iii. 14.

But because those hissings are the natural voice of the serpent's seed, expect them, you that have a mind to follow Christ, and take this guard against them that you are here directed to take: *Having a good conscience.*

It is a fruitless verbal debate, whether conscience be a faculty or habit, or not. As in other things, so in this, which most of all requires more solid and useful consideration, the vain mind of man feedeth on the wind, loves to be busy to no purpose, *magno conatu magnas nugas.* How much better is it to have this supernatural goodness of conscience, than to dispute about the nature of it; to find it duly teaching and admonishing, reproving and comforting, rather than to define it most exactly! *Malo sentire compunctionem, quam scire ejus definitionem.*

When all is examined, conscience will be found to be no other than the *mind of man under the notion of a particular reference to himself and his own actions.* And there is a twofold goodness of the conscience, *purity* and *tranquillity;* and this latter flows from the former, so that the former is the thing we ought primarily to study, and the latter will follow of itself. For a time, indeed, the conscience that is in a good measure pure, may be unpeaceable, but still it is the apprehension and sense of present or former impurity, that makes it so; for, without the consideration of guiltiness, there is nothing that can trouble it: it can not apprehend the wrath of God, but with relation unto sin.

The goodness of conscience here recommended, is, *the integrity and holiness of the whole inward man in a Christian.* So, the ingredients of it are, 1. A due light or knowledge of our rule: that, like the lamps in the temple, must be still burning within, as filthiness is always the companion of darkness. Therefore, if you would have a good conscience, you must by all means have so much light, so much knowledge of the will of God, as may regulate you, and show your way, may teach you how to do, and speak, and think, as in his presence.

2. A constant regard and using of this light, applying it to all things; not sleeping, but working by it; still seeking a nearer conformity with the known will of our God; daily redressing and ordering the afflictions by it; not sparing to knock off whatsoever we find irregular within, that our hearts may be polished and brought to a right frame by that rule. And this is the daily inward work of the Christian, his great business, *to purify himself as the Lord is pure.* 1 John iii. 3. And,

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3. For the advancing of this work, there is needful a frequent search of our hearts and of our actions, not only to consider what we are to do, but what we have done. These reflex inquiries, as they are a main part of the conscience's proper work, are a chief means of making and keeping the conscience good; first, by acquainting the soul with its own state, with the motions and inclinations that are most natural to it; secondly, by stirring it up to work out, and purge away by repentance, the pollution it hath contracted by any outward act or inward motion of sin; and, thirdly, this search both excites and enables the conscience to be more watchful; teaches how to avoid and prevent the like errors for the time to come. As natural wise men labor to gain thus much out of their former oversights in their affairs, to be the wiser and warier by them, and lay up that as bought wit, which they have paid dear for, and therefore are careful to make their best advantage of it: so God makes the consideration of their falls preservatives to his children from falling again, makes a medicine of this poison.

Thus, that the conscience may be good, it must be enlightened, and it must be watchful, both advising before, and after censuring, according to that light.

The greater part of mankind little regard this: they walk by guess, having perhaps ignorant consciences, and the blind, you say, swallow many a fly. Yea, how many consciences are without sense, *as seared with a hot iron*, 1 Tim. iv. 2; so stupified, that they feel nothing! Others rest satisfied with a civil righteousness, an imagined goodness of conscience, because they are free from gross crimes. Others, who know the rule of Christianity, yet study not a conscientious respect to it in all things: they cast some transient looks upon the rule and their own hearts, it may be, but sit not down to compare them, make it not their business, have time for anything but that, *Non vacant bonæ menti*. They do not, with St. Paul, exercise themselves in this, *to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men*. Acts xxiv. 16. Those were his *ascetics* [ἀσκῶ]; he exhausted himself in striving against what might defile the conscience; or, as the word signifies, *elaborately wrought and dressed* his conscience [Ατκήσασα χιτῶνα], HOM. Think you, while other things can not be done without diligence and intention, that this is a work to be done at random? No, it is the most exact and curious of all works, to have the conscience right, and keep it so; as watches, or other such neat pieces of workmanship, except they be daily wound up and skilfully handled, will quickly go wrong. Yea, beside daily inspection, conscience should, like those, at some times be taken to pieces, and more accurately cleansed, for the best kept will gather soil and dust. Sometimes a Christian should set himself to a more solemn examination of his own heart, beyond his daily search; and all little enough to have so precious a good as this, *a good conscience*. They who are most diligent and vigilant, find nothing to abate as superfluous, but still need of more. The heart is to be *kept with all diligence*, or above all keeping. Prov. iv. 23. Corruption within is ready to grow and gain upon it, if it be never so little neglected, and from without, to invade it and get in. We breathe in a corrupt infected air, and have need daily to *antidote* the heart against it.

You that are studying to be excellent in this art of a good conscience, go on, seek daily progress in it. The study of conscience is a more sweet, profitable study than that of all science, wherein is much vexation, and, for the most part, little or no fruit. Read this book diligently, and correct your *errata* by that other book, the word of God. Labor to have it pure and right. Other books and works are [περίεργα] *curious*, and [παράεργα] *by-works*, they shall not appear; but this is one of the books that shall be opened in that great day, *according to which we must be judged*. Rev. xx. 12.

On this follows a good conversation, so inseparably connected with a good conscience. Grace is of a lively, active nature, and doth act like itself. Holiness in the heart, will be holiness in the life too; not some good actions, but a good conversation, a uniform, even tract of life, the whole revolution of it regular. The inequality of some Christians' ways doth breed much discredit to religion, and discomfort to themselves.

But observe here, 1. The order of these two. 2. The principle of both.

1. The order. First, the conscience good, and then the conversation. *Make the tree good and the fruit will be good*, says our Savior. Matt. xii. 33. So, here, a good conscience is the root of a good conversation. Most men begin at the wrong end of this work. They would reform the outward man first: that will do no good; it will be but dead work.

Do not rest upon external reformations, they will not hold; there is no abiding, nor any advantage, in such a work. You think, when reproved, "Oh! I will mend and set about the redress of some outward things." But this is as good as to do nothing. The *mind and conscience being defiled*, as the apostle speaks, Titus i. 15, doth defile all the rest: it is a mire in the spring; although the pipes are cleansed, they will grow quickly foul again. If Christians in their progress in grace would eye this most, that the conscience be growing purer, the heart more spiritual, the affections more regular and heavenly, their outward carriage would be holier; whereas the outward work of performing duties, and being much exercised in religion, may, by the neglect of this, be labor in vain, and amend nothing soundly. To set the outward actions right, though with an honest intention, and not so to regard and find out the inward dis-

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order of the heart, whence that in the actions flows, is but to be still putting the index of a clock right with your finger, while it is foul, or out of order within, which is a continual business, and does no good. Oh! but a purified conscience, a soul renewed and refined in its temper and affections, will make things go right without, in all the duties and acts of our callings.

2. The principle of good in both, is Christ: *Your good conversation in Christ.* The conversation is not good, unless in him; so neither is the conscience.

[1.] *In him*, as to our persons: we must be in him, and then, the conscience and conversation will be good in him. The conscience that is morally good, having some kind of virtuous habits, yet being out of Christ, is nothing but pollution in the sight of God. It must be washed in his blood, ere it can be clean; all our pains will not cleanse it, floods of tears will not do it; it is blood, and that blood alone, that hath the virtue of *purging the conscience from dead works.* Heb. ix. 14.

[2.] *In him*, as the perfect pattern of holiness; the heart and life must be conformed to him, and so made truly good.

[3.] *In him*, as the source of grace, whence it is first derived, and always fed, and maintained, and made active: a Spirit goes forth from him that cleanseth our spirits, and so, makes our conversation clean and holy.

If thou wouldst have thy conscience and hearts purified and pacified, and have thy life certified, go to Christ for all, make use of him; as of his good to wash off thy guiltiness, so of his Spirit to purify and sanctify thee. If thou wouldst have thy heart reserved for God, pure as his temple; if thou wouldst have thy lusts cast out which pollute thee, and findest no power to do it; go to him, desire him to scourge out that filthy rabble, that abuse his house and make it a den of thieves. Seek this, as the only way to have thy soul and thy ways righted to *be in Christ*, and then, *walk in him.* Let thy conversation be in Christ. Study him, and follow him: look on his way, on his graces, his obedience, and humility, and meekness, till, by looking on them, they make the very idea of thee new, as the painter doth of a face he would draw to the life. So behold his glory, that thou mayest be *transformed from glory to glory.* But as it is there added, this must be *by the Spirit of the Lord.* 2 Cor. iii. 18. Do not, therefore, look on his simply, as an example without thee, but as life within thee. Having *received him*, walk not only like him, but *in him*, as the Apostle St. Paul speaks, Col. ii. 6. And as the word is here, *have your conversation*, not only according to Christ, but *in Christ. Draw from his fulness grace for grace.* John. i. 16.

II. The other thing in the words, is, the advantage of this good conscience and conversation. 1. There is even an external success attends it, in respect of the malicious, ungodly world: *They shall be ashamed that falsely accuse you.* Thus often it is even most evident to men; the victory of innocency, silent innocency, most strongly confuting all calumny, making the ungodly, false accusers hide their heads. Thus, without stirring, the integrity of a Christian conquers; as a rock, unremoved, breaks the waters that are dashing against it. And this is not only a lawful, but a laudable way of revenge, shaming calumny out of it, and punishing evil-speakers by well-doing; showing really how false their accusers were. This is the most powerful apology and refutation; as the sophister who would prove there was no motion, was best answered by the philosopher's rising up and walking. And without this good conscience and conversation, we cut ourselves short of other apologies for religion, whatsoever we say for it. One unchristian action will disgrace it more than we can repair by the largest and best-framed speeches on its behalf.

Let those, therefore, who have given their names to Christ honor him, and their holy profession, most this way. Speak for him as occasion requires;—why should we not? provided it be *with meekness and fear*, as our apostle hath taught?—but let this be the main defence of religion: live suitably to it, and commend it so. Thus all should do who are called Christians; they should adorn that holy profession with holy conversation. But the most are nothing better than spots and blots, some wallowing in the mire, and provoking one another to all uncleanness. Oh! the unchristian life of Christians; an evil to be much lamented, more than all the troubles we sustain! But these, indeed, do thus deny Christ, and declare that they are not his. So many as have any reality of Christ in you, be so much the more holy, the more wicked the rest are. Strive to make it up, and to honor that name which they disgrace. And if they will reproach you, because ye walk not with them, and cast the mire of false reproaches on you, take no notice, but go on your way: it will dry, and easily rub off. Be not troubled with misjudgings; shame them out of it by your blameless and holy carriage, for that will do most to put lies out of countenance. However, if they continue impudent, the day is at hand, wherein all the enemies of Christ shall be *all clothed over* and covered *with shame*, and they who have kept a good conscience, and walked in Christ, *shall lift up their faces with joy.*

2dly. There is an intrinsical good in this goodness of conscience, that sweetens all sufferings: as it follows,—

VER. 17. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

THERE is a necessity of suffering in any way wherein ye can walk; if ye choose the way of wickedness, you shall not, by doing so, escape suffering; and that supposed, this is by far the better, to suffer *in well-doing*, and

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*for* it, than to suffer either *for doing evil*, or simply to suffer *in that way* (as the words run), κακοποιοῦντας πάσχειν, *to suffer doing evil.*

The way of the ungodly in not exempt from suffering, even at present. Setting aside the judgment and wrath to come, they often suffer from the hands of men, whether justly or unjustly, and often from the immediate hand of God, who is always just, both in this and the other, causing the sinner *to eat of the fruit of his own ways.* Prov. i. 30. When profane, ungodly men offer violences and wrongs one to another, in this God is just against both, in that wherein they themselves are both unjust: they are both rebellious against him, and so, though they intend not to take up his quarrel, he means it himself, and sets them to lash one another. The wicked profess their combined enmity against the children of God, yet they are not always at peace among themselves: they often revile and defame each other, and so it is kept up on both sides. Whereas the godly can not hold them game in that, being like their Lord, *who, when he was reviled, reviled not again.* Besides, although the ungodly flourish at some times, yet they have their days of suffering, are subject to the common miseries of the life of man, and the common calamities of evil times; the sword and the pestilence, and such like public judgments. Now, in what kind soever it be that they suffer, they are at a great disadvantage, compared with the godly, in their sufferings.

Here impure consciences may lie sleeping, while men are at ease themselves; but when any great trouble comes and shakes them, then, suddenly, the conscience begins to awake and bustle, and proves more grievous to them, than all that comes on them from without. When they remember their despising the ways of God, their neglecting of him and holy things, whence they are convinced how comfort might be reaped in these days of distress, this cuts and galls them most, looking back at their licentious profane ways; each of them strikes to the heart. As the apostle calls sin, *the sting of death*, so is it of all sufferings, and the sting that strikes deepest into the very soul: no stripes are like those that are secretly given by an accusing conscience. *Surdo verbere cedit.* Juv.

A sad condition it is, to have thence the greatest anguish, whence the greatest comfort should be expected; to have thickest darkness, whence they should look for the clearest light. Men who have evil consciences, love not to be with them, are not much with themselves: as St. Augustine compares them to such as have shrewd wives, they love not to be much at home. But yet, outward distress sets a man inward, as foul weather drives him home, and there, where he should find comfort, he is met with such accusations as are *like a continual dropping*, as Solomon speaks of a contentious woman, Prov. xix. 3. It is a most wretched state, to live under sufferings or afflictions of any kind, and be a stranger to God; for a man to have God and his conscience against him, that should be his solace in times of distress; being knocked off from the comforts of the world, whereon he rested, and having no provision of spiritual comfort within, nor expectation from above.

But the children of God, in their sufferings, especially in such as are encountered for God, can retire within themselves, and rejoice in the testimony of a good conscience, yea, in the possession of Christ dwelling within them. All the trouble that befalls them, is but as the rattling of hail upon the tiles of the house, to a man who is sitting within a warm room at a rich banquet; and such is a good conscience, a feast, yea, *a continual feast.* The believer looks on his Christ, and in him reads his deliverance from condemnation, and that is a strong comfort, a cordial that keeps him from fainting in the greatest distresses. When the conscience gives this testimony, that sin is forgiven, it raises the soul above outward sufferings. Tell the Christian of loss of goods, or liberty, or friends, or life, he answers all with this: Christ is mine, and my sin is pardoned; that is enough for me. What would I not have suffered, to have been delivered from the wrath of God, if any suffering of mine in this world could have done that? Now that is done to my hand, all other sufferings are light; they are *light* and *but for a moment.* One thought of eternity drowns the whole time of the world's duration, which is but as one instant, or twinkling of an eye, between eternity before, and eternity after; how much less is any short life (and a small part of that is spent in sufferings), yea, what is it, though it were all sufferings without interruption, which yet it is not! When I look forward to the crown, all vanishes, and I think it *less than nothing.* Now, these things the good conscience speaks to the Christian in his sufferings; therefore, certainly, his choice is best, who provides it for his companion against evil and troublous times. If moral integrity went so far (as truly it did in some men who had much of it), that they scorned all hard encounters, and esteemed this a sufficient bulwark, a strength impregnable, *Hic murus aheneus esto, nil conscire sibi*, how much more the Christian's good conscience, which alone is truly such!

As the Christian may thus look inward, and rejoice in tribulation, so there is another look, *upward*, that is here likewise mentioned, that allays very much all the sufferings of the saints: *If the will of God be so.*

The Christian mind hath still one eye to this, looking above the hand of men, and all inferior causes, in suffering, whether for the name of God, or otherwise; he looks on the sovereign will of God, and sweetly complies with that in all. Neither is there anything that doth more powerfully compose and quiet

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the mind than this; it makes it invincibly firm and content, when it hath attained this self-resignation to the *will of God*, so as to agree to that in everything. This is the very thing wherein tranquillity of spirit lies: it is no riddle, nor hard to be understood, yet few attain it. And, I pray you, what is gained by our reluctances and repinings, but pain to ourselves? God *doth what he will*, whether we consent or not. Our disagreeing doth not prevent his purposes, but our own peace: if we will not be led, we are drawn. We must suffer, if he will; but if we will what he wills, even in suffering, that makes it sweet and easy; when our mind goes along with his, and we willingly move with that stream of providence, which will carry us with it, even though we row against it; in which case we still have nothing but toil and weariness for our pains.

But this hard argument of necessity, is needless to the child of God, who, persuaded of the wisdom and love of his Father, knows that to be truly best for him that his hand bestows. Sufferings are unpleasant to the flesh, and it will grumble; but the voice of the spirit of God, in his children, is that of of that good king (Isa. xxxix. 8), *Good is the word of the Lord*. Let him do with me as seemeth good in his eyes. My foolish heart would think these things I suffer might be abated, but my wise and heavenly Father thinks otherwise. He hath his design of honor to himself, and good to me in these, which I would be loath to cross if I might. I might do God more service by those temporal advantages, but doth not he know best what is fit? Can not he advance his grace more by the want of these things I desire, than I could do myself by having them? Can not he make me a gainer by sickness and poverty, and disgraces, and loss of friends and children, by making up all in himself, and teaching me more of his all-sufficiency? Yea, even concerning the affairs of my soul, I am to give up all to his good pleasure. Though I desire the light of his countenance above all things in this world, yet, if he see fit to hide it sometimes, if that be his will, let me not murmur. There is nothing lost by this obedient temper; yea, what way soever he deals with us, there is much more advantage in it. No soul shall enjoy so much in all estates, as that which hath divested and renounced itself, and hath no will but God's.

VER. 18. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust (that he might bring us to God), being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.

THE whole life of a Christian, is a steady aiming at conformity with Christ; so that in anything, whether doing or suffering, there can be no argument so apposite and persuasive as his example, and no exercise of obedience, either active or passive, so difficult, but the view and contemplation of that example will powerfully sweeten it. The apostle doth not decline the frequent use of it. Here we have it thus: *For Christ also suffered.*

Though the doctrine of Christian suffering, is the occasion of his speaking of Christ's suffering, yet he insists on it beyond the simple necessity of that argument, for its own excellency and for further usefulness. So we shall consider the double capacity. I. As an encouragement and engagement for Christians to suffer. II. As the great point of their faith, whereon all their hopes and happiness depend, being the means of their restoration to God.

I. The due consideration of Christ's sufferings doth much temper all the sufferings of Christians, especially such as are directly for Christ.

It is some known ease to the mind, in any distress, to look upon examples of the like, or greater distress, in present or former times. *Ferre quam sortem patiuntur omnes.* It diverts the eye from continual poring on our own suffering; and, when we return to view it again, it lessens it, abates of the imagined bulk and greatness of it. Thus public, thus spiritual troubles are lightened; and particularly the sufferings and temptations of the godly, by the consideration of this as their common lot, their highway, not new in the person of any: *No temptation has befallen you, but what is common to men.* 1 Cor. x. 13. If we trace the lives of the most eminent saints, shall we not find every notable step that is recorded, marked with a new cross, one trouble following on another, *velut unda pellitur unda*, as the waves do, in an incessant succession? Is not this manifest in the life of Abraham, and of Jacob, and the rest of God's worthies, in the Scriptures? And doth not this make it an unreasonable, absurd thought, to dream of an exemption? Would any one have a new untrodden way cut out for him, free of thorns, and strewed with flowers all along? Does he expect to meet with no contradictions, nor hard measure from the world, or imagine that there may be such a dexterity necessary, as to keep its good will, and the friendship of God too? This will not be; and it is a universal conclusion, *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution.* 2 Tim. iii. 12. This is the path to the kingdom, that which all the sons of God, the heirs of it, have gone in, even Christ; according to that well known word, One son without sin, but not one without suffering: *Christ also suffered.*

The example and company of the saints in suffering, is very considerable, but that of Christ is more so than any other, yea, than all the rest together. Therefore the apostle, having represented the former at large, ends in this, as the top of all, Heb. xii. 1, 2. *There is a race set before us*, it is to be run, and *run with patience*, and *without fainting*: now, he tells us of a *cloud of witnesses*,

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a cloud made up of instances of believers suffering before us, and the heat of the day wherein we run is somewhat cooled even by that cloud compassing us; but the main strength of our comfort here, lies in *looking to Jesus*, in the eying of his sufferings and their issue. The considering and contemplating of him will be the strongest cordial, will keep you from *wearying* and *fainting* in the way, as it is verse 3.

The singular power of this instance, lies in many particulars considerable in it. To specify some chief things briefly in the steps of the present words: Consider, 1. The greatness of the example.

[1.] The greatness of the person, *Christ*, which is marked out to us by the manner of expression [καὶ Χριστὸς] *Christ also*; besides and beyond all others, *even Christ himself*.

There can be no higher example. Not only are the sons of adoption sufferers, but the *begotten*, the *only begotten Son*, the eternal heir of glory, in whom all the rest have their title, their sonship and heirship, derived from, and dependant on his; not only all the saints, but the king of saints. Who now shall repine at suffering? Shall the wretched sons of men refuse to suffer, after the suffering of the spotless, glorious Son of God? As St. Bernard speaks of pride, *Ubi se humiliavit Majestas, vermiculus infletur et intumescat*— After majesty, highest majesty, to teach us humility, hath so humbled himself, how wicked and impudent a thing will it be for a worm to swell, to be high conceited! Since thus our Lord hath taught us by suffering in his own person, and hath dignified sufferings so, we should certainly rather be ambitious than afraid of them.

[2.] The greatness and the continuance of his sufferings. That which the apostle speaks here, of *his once suffering*, hath its truth: taking in all, *He suffered once*; his whole life was one continued line of suffering, from the manger to the cross. All that lay between was suitable; his estate and entertainment throughout his whole life, agreed well with so mean a beginning, and so reproachful an end, of it. Forced upon a flight, while he could not go, and living till he appeared in public, in a very mean despised condition, as the carpenter's son; and, afterward, his best works paid with envy and revilings, called a *wine-bibber*, and *a caster out of devils by the prince of devils*; his life often laid in wait and sought for. Art thou mean in thy birth and life, despised, misjudged, and reviled, on all hands? Look how it was with him, who had more right than thou hast, to better entertainment in the world. Thou wilt not deny it was his own; *it was made by him, and he was in it, and it knew him not.* Are thy friends harsh to thee? *He came unto his own, and his own received him not.* Hast thou a mean cottage, or art thou drawn from it and hast no dwelling, and art thou every way poor and ill-accommodated? He was as poor as thou canst be, *and had not where to lay his head*, worse provided than the *birds* and *foxes!* But then, consider to what a height his sufferings rose in the end, that most remarkable part of them here meant by his *once suffering for sins.* If thou shouldst be cut off by a violent death, or in the prime of thy years, mayest thou not look upon him as going before thee in both these? And in so ignominious a way! Scourged, buffeted, and spit on, he endured all, *He gave his back to the smiters*, and then, as the same prophet hath it, *He was numbered among the transgressors.* Isa. liii. *ult.* When they had used him with all that shame, they hanged him between two thieves, and they that passed by *wagged their heads*, and darted taunts at him, as at a mark fixed to the cross: *they scoffed and said, He saved others, himself he can not save. He endured the cross, and despised the shame*, says the apostle, Heb. xii. 2.

Thus we see the outside of his sufferings. But the Christian is subject to grievous temptations and sad desertions, which are heavier by far than the sufferings which indeed the apostle speaks of here. Yet even in these, this same argument of his holds. For our Savior is not unacquainted with, nor ignorant of, either of those, though still *without sin.* If any of *that* had been in any of his sufferings, it had not furthered, but undone all our comfort in him. But *tempted* he was; He suffered that way too, and the temptations were terrible, as you know. And was there not some strong conflict when he fell down and prayed in the garden, and *sweat drops of blood?* Was there not an awful eclipse, when he cried out on the cross, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* So that, even in these, we may apply this comfort, and stay ourselves or our souls on him, and go to him as a compassionate High-Priest. Heb. iv. 15. *For Christ also suffered.*

2. Consider the fitness of the example. As the same is every way great, yea, *greatest*, so it is fit, the *fittest* to take with a Christian, to set before him, as being so near a pattern, wherein he hath so much interest. As the argument is strong in itself, so, to the new man, the Christian man, it is particularly stror gest; it binds him most, as it is not far fetched, but *exemplum domesticum*, a home pattern; as when you persuade men to virtue, by the example of those that they have a near relation to. They are *his servants*, and shall they, or would they, think to *be greater than their Master*, to be exempt from his lot in the world? They are *his soldiers.* and will they refuse to follow him, and to endure with him? *Suffer hardship*, says the apostle to Timothy, *as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.* 2 Tim. ii. 3. Will not a word from him put a vigor in them to go after him, whether upon any march or service, when he calls them friends, *Commilitones*, as they tell us was Julius Cæsar's words which wrought so much on his trained bands? Yea, *He is not ashamed to call*



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*them brethren* (Heb. ii. 11), and will they be ashamed to share with him, and to be known by their suitable estate, to be his brethren?

3. Consider the efficacy of the example. There is, from these sufferings of Christ, such a result of safety and comfort to a Christian, as makes them a most effectual encouragement to suffering, which is this: if he *suffered once*, and that was *for sin*, now that heavy, intolerable suffering for sin is once taken out of the believer's way, it makes all other sufferings light, exceeding light, as nothing in his account. *He suffered once for sin*, so that to them who lay hold on him this holds sure, that sin is never to be suffered for in the way of strict justice again, as not by him, so not by them who are in him; for *He suffered for sins once*, and it was for *their* sins, every poor believer's. So, now the soul, finding itself rid of that fear, goes cheerfully through all other hazards and sufferings.

Whereas the soul, perplexed about that question, finds no relief in all other enjoyments; all propositions of lower comforts are unsavory and troublesome to it. Tell it of peace and prosperity; say, however the world go, you shall have ease and pleasure, and you shall be honored and esteemed by all; though you could make a man sure of these, yet if his conscience be working and stirred about the matter of his sin, and the wrath of God which is tied close to sin, he will wonder at your impertinency, in that you speak so far from the purpose. Say what you will of these, he still asks, What do you mean by this? Those things answer not to me. Do you think I can find comfort in them, so long as my sin is unpardoned, and there is a sentence of eternal death standing above my head? I feel even an impress of somewhat of that hot indignation; some flashes of it flying and lighting upon the face of my soul, and how can I take pleasure in these feelings you speak of? And though I should be senseless, and feel nothing of this all my life, yet, how soon shall I have done with it, and the delights that reach no further. And then to have *everlasting burnings*, an eternity of wrath to enter to! How can I be satisfied with that estate:—All you offer a man in this posture, is as if you should set dainty fare, and bring music with it, before a man lying almost pressed to death under great weights, and should bid him eat and be merry, but lift not off his pressure: you do but mock the man and add to his misery. On the contrary, he that hath got but a view of his Christ, and reads his own pardon in Christ's sufferings, can rejoice in this, in the midst of all other sufferings, and look on death without apprehension, yea, with gladness, for the *sting is out*. Christ hath made all pleasant to him by this one thing, that *he suffered once for sins*. Christ hath perfumed the cross and the grave, and made all sweet. The pardoned man finds himself light, skips and leaps, and, *through Christ strengthening him*, he can encounter any trouble. If you think to shut up his spirit within outward sufferings, he is now, as Samson in his strength, able to carry away on his back the gates with which you would enclose him. Yea, he can submit patiently to the Lord's hand in any correction: Thou hast forgiven my sin, therefore deal with me as thou wilt; all is well.

Refl. 1. Let us learn to consider more deeply, and to esteem more highly, Christ and his suffering, to silence our grumbling at our petty light crosses; for so they are, in comparison of his. Will not the great odds of his perfect innocency, and of the nature and measure of his sufferings; will not the sense of the redemption of our souls from death by his death; will none of these, nor all of them, argue us into more thankfulness and love to him, and patience in our trials? Why will we then be called Christians? It is impossible to be fretful and malcontent with the Lord's dealing with us in any kind, till first we have forgotten how he dealt with his dearest Son for our sakes. As St. Bernard speaks, *Enimvero nons entient sua, qui illius vulnera intuentur:* They truly feel not their own wounds, who contemplate his. But these things are not weighed by the most. We hear and speak of them, but our hearts receive not the impressions of them; therefore we repine against our Lord and Father, and drown a hundred great blessings in any little trouble that befalls us.

Refl. 2. Seek surer interest in Christ and his suffering, than the most either have attained, or are aspiring to; otherwise all that he suffered here will afford thee no ease or comfort in any kind of suffering. No, though thou suffer for a good cause, even for his cause, still this will be an extraneous, foreign thing to thee, and to tell thee of his sufferings, will work no otherwise with thee than some other common story. And as in the day of peace thou regardest it no more, so in the day of thy trouble, thou shall receive no more comfort from it. Other things which you esteemed, shall have no comfort to speak to you: *though you pursue them with words* (as Solomon says of the poor man's friends, Prov. xix. 7), *yet they shall be wanting to you.* And then you will surely find how happy it were to have this to turn you to, that the Lord Jesus suffered for sins, and for your sins, and therefore hath made it a light and comfortable business to you, to undergo momentary passing sufferings.

Days of trial will come; do you not see they are on us already? Be persuaded, therefore, to turn your eyes and desires more toward Christ. This is the thing we would still press: the support and happiness of your souls lie on it. But you will not believe it. Oh, that you knew the comforts and sweetness of Christ! Oh, that one would speak, who knew more of them! Were you once but entered into this knowledge of him, and the virtue of his sufferings, you would account all your days

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but lost wherein you have not known him; and in all times, your hearts would find no refreshment like to the remembrance of his love.

Having somewhat considered these sufferings, as the apostle's argument for his present purpose, we come now,

II. To take a nearer view of the particulars by which he illustrates them, as the main point of our faith and comfort. Of them, here are two things to be remarked, their cause and their kind.

First. Their cause; both their meritorious cause and their final cause; first, what in us procured these sufferings unto Christ, and secondly, what those his sufferings procured unto us. Our guiltiness brought suffering upon him; and his suffering brings us unto God.

1*st*. For the meritorious cause, what in us brought sufferings on Christ. The evil of sin hath the evil of punishment inseparably connected with it. We are under a natural obligation of obedience unto God, and he justly urges it; so that where the *command* of his law is broken, the *curse* of it presently followeth. And though it was simply in the power of the supreme lawgiver to have dispensed with the infliction, yet, having in his wisdom purposed to be known a just God in that way, following forth the tenor of his law, of necessity there must be a suffering for sin.

Thus, the angels who keep not their station, falling from it, fell into a dungeon, where they are, *under chains of darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day*. Jude 6. Man also fell under the sentence of death, but in this is the difference between man and them: they were not one of them, as the parent or common root of the rest, but each one fell or stood for himself alone, so a part of them only perished; but man fell altogether, so that not one of all the race could escape condemnation, unless some other way of satisfaction be found out. And here it is: *Christ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust. Father*, says he, *I have glorified thee on earth*. John xvii. 3. In this plot, indeed, do all the divine attributes shine in their full lustre; infinite mercy, and immense justice, and power, and wisdom. Looking on Christ as ordained for that purpose, *I have found a ransom*, says the Father, one fit to redeem man, a kinsman, one of that very same stock, the Son of Man: one able to redeem man by satisfying me, and fulfilling all I lay upon him; *My son, my only begotten Son, in whom my soul delights*. And he is willing, undertakes, all, says, *Lo, I come*, Psalm xl. 7: We are agreed upon the way of this redemption; yea, upon the persons to be redeemed. It is not a roving blind bargain, a price paid for we know not whom. Hear his own words: *Thou hast given the Son* (says the Son to the Father) *power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given him*; and *all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them*. John xvii. 2, 10.

For the sins of these he suffered, standing in their room; and what he did and suffered according to the law of that covenant, was done and suffered by them. All the sins of all the elect were made up into a huge bundle, and bound upon his shoulders. So the prophet speaks in their name: *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows*: and, *The Lord laid* [*or made to meet*] *on him the iniquity of us all*. Isa. liii. 5. He had spoken of many ways of sin, and said, *We have turned every one to his own way*; here he binds up all in the word *iniquity*, as all one sin, as if it were that one transgression of the first Adam, that brought on the curse of his seed, borne by the second Adam, to take it away from all that are his seed, who are in him as their root.

He is the great High Priest appearing before God with the names of the elect upon his shoulders, and in his heart bearing them and all their burdens, and offering for them, not any other sacrifice than *himself*; charging all their sin on himself, as the priest did the sins of the people on the head of the sacrifice. *He, by the Eternal Spirit*, says the apostle, *offered up himself without spot unto God, spotless and sinless*, Heb. ix. 14; and so he alone is fit to take away our sin, being a satisfactory oblation for it. He suffered: in him was our ransom, and thus it was paid. In the man, Christ, was the Deity, and so his blood was, as the apostle calls it, *the blood of God*, Acts xx. 28; and he being pierced, it came forth, and was told down as the rich price of our redemption. *Not silver, nor gold, nor corruptible things*, as our apostle hath it before, *but the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish*.

*Obs.* 1. Shall any man offer to bear the name of a Christian, who pleases himself in the way of sin, and can delight and sport himself with it, when he considers this, that Christ suffered for sin? Do not think it, you who still account sin sweet, which he found so bitter, and account that light, which was so heavy to him, and made his *soul heavy to the death*. You are yet far off from him. If you were in him, and one with him, there would be some harmony of your hearts with his, and some sympathy with those sufferings, as endured by your Lord, your Head, and for you. They who, with a right view, see him as pierced by their sins, that sight pierces them, and makes them mourn, brings forth tears, beholding the gushing forth of his blood. This makes the real Christian an avowed enemy to sin. Shall I ever be friends with that, says he, which killed my Lord? No, but I will ever kill it, and do it by applying his death. The true penitent is sworn to be the death of sin: he may be surprised by it, but there is no possibility of reconcilement betwixt them.

Thou that livest kindly and familiarly with sin, and either openly declarest thyself for it, or hast a secret love for it, where canst thou

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reap any comfort? Not from these sufferings. To thee, continuing in that posture, it is all one as if Christ had not suffered for sins; yea, it is worse than if no such thing had been, that there is salvation, and terms of mercy offered unto thee, and yet thou perishest; that there is *balm in Gilead*, and yet thou art not healed. And if thou hast not comfort from Jesus crucified, I know not whence thou canst have any that will hold out. Look about thee, tell me what thou seest, either in thy possession or in thy hopes, that thou esteemest most, and layest thy confidence on. Or, to deal more liberally with thee, see what estate thou wouldst choose, hadst thou thy wish; stretch thy fancy to devise an earthly happiness. These times are full of unquietness; but give thee a time of the calmest peace, not an air of trouble stirring; put thee where thou wilt, far off from fear of sword and pestilence, and encompass thee with children, friends, and possessions, and honors, and comfort, and health to enjoy all these; yet one thing thou must admit in the midst of them all; within a while thou must die, and having no real portion in Christ, but only a deluding dream of it, thou sinkest through that death into another death far more terrible. Of all thou enjoyest, nothing goes along with thee but unpardoned sin, and that delivers thee up to endless sorrow. *Oh that* you *were wise*, and *would consider your latter end!* Do not still gaze about you upon trifles, but yet be entreated to take notice of your Savior, and receive him, that he may be yours. Fasten your belief and your love on him. Give all your heart to him, who stuck not to give himself an offering for your sins.

*Obs.* 2. To you who have fled unto him for refuge, if sensible of the church's distress, be upheld with this thought, that he who suffered for it, will not suffer it to be undone. All the rage of enemies, yea, *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* He may, for a time, suffer the church to be brought low for the sins of his people, and other wise reasons, but he will not utterly forsake it. Though there is much chaff, yet he hath a precious number in these kingdoms, for whom he shed his blood: many God hath called, and many he has yet to call; he will not lose any of his flock which he bought so dear (Acts xx. 28), and for their sake he will, at one time or another, repair our breaches, and establish his throne in these kingdoms. For yourselves, what can affright you while this is in your eye? Let others tremble at the apprehension of sword or pestilence; but surely, you have for them and all other hazards, a most satisfying answer in this: my Christ hath suffered for sin; I am not to fear that; and *that* set aside, I know the worst is but death—I am wrong; truly, that is the best: to be *dissolved, and be with Christ, is* [πολλῷ μᾶλλον κρεῖσσον] *much more better.* Phil. i. 23. *So being justified by faith*, believers *have peace with God*, and *rejoice in hope of the glory of God, glorifying even in tribulations.* Rom. v. 1–3.

This were a happy estate indeed. But what shall they think who have no assurance, they who doubt that Christ is theirs, and that he suffered for their sins? I know no way but to believe on him, and then you shall know that he is yours. From this arises the grand mistake of many: they would first know that Christ is theirs, and then would believe; which can not be, because he becomes ours by believing. It is that which gives title and propriety to him. He is set before sinners as a Savior who hath suffered for sin that they may look to him and be saved; that they may lay over their souls on him, and then they may be assured he suffered for them.

Say, then, what is it that scares thee from Christ? This, thou seest, is a poor groundless exception, for he is set before thee as a Savior to believe on, that so he may be thy Savior. Why wilt thou not come unto him? Why refusest thou to believe? Art thou a sinner? Art thou unjust? Then, he is fit for thy case: he suffered for sins, *the just for the unjust.* Oh! but so many and so great sins! Yea, is that it? It is true indeed, and good reason thou hast to think so; but 1*st*, Consider whether they be excepted in the proclamation of Christ, the pardon that comes in his name: if not, if he make no exception, why wilt thou? 2*dly*, Consider if thou wilt call them greater than this sacrifice, *he suffered.* Take due notice of the greatness and worth, first, of his person, and then, of his sufferings, and thou wilt not dare to say thy sin goes above the value of his suffering, or that thou art too unjust for him to justify thee. Be as unrighteous as thou canst be, art thou convinced of it? then, know that Jesus the just is more righteous than thy unrighteousness. And, after all is said that any sinner hath to say, they are yet, without exception, *blessed who trust in him.* Psalm ii. *ult.*

2*dly*. We have the *final cause* of his sufferings, *That he might bring us to God.*] It is the chief point of wisdom, to proportion means to their end: therefore, the all-wise God, in putting his only Son to so hard a task, had a high end in this, and this was it, *That he might bring us unto God.* In this we have three things, 1*st*, The nature of this good, nearness unto God. 2*dly*, Our deprivement of it, by our own sin. 3*dly*, Our restoration to it, by Christ's sufferings.

[1.] The nature of this good. God hath suited every creature he hath made, with a convenient good to which it tends, and in the obtainment of which it rests and is satisfied. Natural bodies have all their own natural place, whither, if not hindered, they move incessantly till they be in it; and they declare, by resting there, that they are (as I may say) where they would be. Sensitive

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creatures are carried to seek a sensitive good, as agreeable to their rank in being, and, attaining that, aim no further. Now, in this is the excellency of man, that he is made capable of a communion with his Maker, and, because capable of it, is unsatisfied without it; the soul being cut out, so to speak, to that largeness, can not be filled with less. Though he is fallen from his right to that good, and from all right desire of it, yet, not from a capacity of it, no, nor from a necessity of it, for the answering and filling of his capacity.

Though the heart once gone from God, turns continually further away from him, and moves not toward him till it be renewed, yet even in that wandering, it retains that natural relation to God, as its centre, that it hath no true rest elsewhere, nor can by any means find it. It is made for him, and is therefore still restless till it meet with him.

It is true, the natural man takes much pains to quiet his heart by other things, and digests many vexations with hopes of contentment in the end and accomplishment of some design he hath; but still the heart misgives. Many times he attains not the thing he seeks: but if he do, yet he never attains the satisfaction he seeks and expects in it; but only learns from that to desire something further, and still hunts on after a fancy, drives his own shadow before him, and never overtakes it; and if he did, yet it is but a shadow. And so in running from God, besides the sad end, he carries an interwoven punishment with his sin, the natural disquiet and vexation of his spirit, fluttering to and fro, and *finding no rest for the soul of his foot;* the *waters* of inconstancy and vanity *covering the whole face of the earth.*

We study to debase our souls, and to make them content with less than they are made for; yea, we strive to make them carnal, that they may be pleased with sensible things. And in this, men attain a brutish content for a time, forgetting their higher good. But certainly, we can not think it sufficient, and that no more were to be desired beyond ease and plenty, and pleasures of sense, for then, a beast in good case and a good pasture, might contest with us in point of happiness, and carry it away; for that sensitive good he enjoys without sin, and without the vexation that is mixed with us in all.

These things are too gross and heavy. The soul, the immortal soul, descended from heaven, must either be more happy, or remain miserable. The highest, the Increated Spirit, is the proper good, *the Father of spirits,* that pure and full good which raises the soul above itself: whereas all other things draw it down below itself. So, then, it is never well with the soul, but when it is near unto God, yea, in its union with him, married to him; mismatching itself elsewhere, it hath never anything but shame and sorrow. *All that forsake thee shall be ashamed,* says the prophet, Jer. xvii. 13; and the psalmist, *They that are afar off from thee shall perish.* Psal. lxxiii. 27. And this is indeed our natural miserable condition, and it is often expressed this way, by estrangedness and distance from God. See Eph. ii., where the Gentiles are spoken of as *far off* by their profession and nation, but both Jews and Gentiles are far off by their natural foundation, and both are brought near by the blood of the New Covenant.

[2.] And this is the second thing here implied, that we are *far off by reason of sin;* otherwise there were no need of Christ, especially in this way of suffering for sin, *to bring us unto God.* At the first, sin, as the breach of God's command, broke off man, and separated him from God, and ever since the soul remains naturally remote from God. 1. It lies under a sentence of exile, pronounced by the justice of God; condemned to banishment from God, who is the life and light of the soul, as the soul itself is of the body. 2. It is under a flat impossibility of returning by itself; and that in two respects; first, because of the guiltiness of sin standing between, as an unpassable mountain or wall of separation; secondly, because of the dominion of sin keeping the soul captive, yea, still drawing it farther off from God, increasing the distance and the enmity every day. Nor is there either in heaven or under heaven, any way to remove this enmity, and make up this distance, and restore man to the possession of God, but this one, by Christ, and by him suffering for sins.

[3.] Our restoration to nearness to God is by Christ's sufferings. He endured the sentence pronounced against man, yea, even in this particular notion of it, as a sentence of exile from God: one main ingredient in his suffering was that sensible desertion by his heavenly Father, of which he cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* And, by suffering the sentence pronounced, he took away the guiltiness of sin, he himself being *spotless and undefiled. For such a high priest became us,* Heb. vii. 26: the more defiled we were, the more did we stand in need of an undefiled priest and sacrifice; and he was both. Therefore the apostle here very fitly mentions this qualification of our Savior, as necessary for restoring us unto God, *the just for the unjust.* So taking on himself, and taking away, the guilt of sin, setting his strong shoulder to remove that mountain, he made way or access for man unto God.

This the apostle hath excellently expressed, Eph. ii. 16. *He hath reconciled us by his cross, having slain the enmity:* He killed the quarrel between God and us, killed it by his death; brings the parties together, and hath laid a sure foundation of agreement in his own sufferings; appeases his Father's wrath by them, and by the same, appeases the sinner's conscience. All that God hath to say in

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point of justice, is answered there; all that the poor humbled sinner hath to say, is answered too. He hath offered up such an atonement as satisfies the father, so that he is content that sinners should come in and be reconciled. And then, Christ gives notice of this to the soul, to remove all jealousies. It is full of fear: though it would, it dares not approach unto God, apprehending him to be *a consuming fire*. They who have done the offence are usually the hardest to reconcile, because they are still in doubt of their pardon. But Christ assures the soul of a full and hearty forgiveness, quenching the flaming wrath of God by his blood. No, says Christ, upon my warrant come in; you will now find my Father otherwise than you imagine: he hath declared himself satisfied at my hands, and is willing to receive you, to be heartily and thoroughly friends; never to hear a word more of the quarrel that was between you; to grant a full oblivion. And if the soul bear back still through distrust, he takes it by the hand, and draws it forward, leads it unto his Father (as the word προσαγάγη imports); presents it to him, and leaves not the matter till it be made a full and sure agreement.

But for this purpose, that the soul may be both able and willing to come unto God, the sufferings of Christ take away that other impediment. As they satisfy the sentence, and thereby remove the guiltiness of sin, so he hath by them purchased a deliverance from the tyrannous *power* of sin, which detains the soul from God, after all the way has been made for its return. And he hath a power of applying his sufferings to the soul's deliverance, in that kind too. He opens the prison-doors to them who are led captive; and because the great chain is upon the heart willingly enthralled in sin, he, by his sovereign power, takes off that, frees the heart from the love of sin, and shows what a base slavish condition it is in, by representing, in his effectual way, the goodness of God, his readiness to entertain a returning sinner, and the sweetness and happiness of communion with him. Thus he powerfully persuades the heart to shake off all, and, without further delay, to return unto God, so as to be received into favor and friendship, and to walk in the way of friendship with God, to give up itself to his obedience, to disdain the vile service of sin, and live suitably to the dignity of fellowship and union with God.

And there is nothing but the power of Christ alone that is able to effect this, to persuade a sinner to return, to bring home a heart unto God. Common mercies of God, though they have a leading faculty to repentance (Rom. ii. 4), yet the rebellious heart will not be led by them. The judgments of God, public or personal, though they ought to drive us to God, yet the heart, unchanged, runs the further from God. Do we not see it by ourselves and other sinners about us? They look not at all toward him who smites, much less do they return; or if any more serious thoughts of returning arise upon the surprise of an affliction, how soon vanish they, either the stroke abating, or the heart, by time, growing hard and senseless under it! Indeed, when it is renewed and brought in by Christ, then all other things have a sanctified influence, according to their quality, to stir up a Christian to seek after fuller communion, closer walk, and nearer access to God. But leave Christ out, I say, and all other means work not this way: neither the works nor the word of God sounding daily in his ear, *Return, return*. Let the noise of the rod speak it too, and both join together to make the cry the louder, *yet the wicked will do wickedly*, Dan. xii. 10; will not hearken to the voice of God, will not *see the hand of God lifted up*, Isaiah xxvi. 11; will not be persuaded to go in and seek peace and reconcilement with God, though declaring himself provoked to punish, and to behave himself as an enemy against his own people. How many are there, who, in their own particular, have been very sharply lashed with divers scourges on their bodies, or their families, and yet are never a whit the nearer God for it all, their hearts are proud, and earthly, and vain, as ever! and let him lay on never so much, they will still be the same. Only a Divine virtue, going forth from Christ *lifted up, draws men* unto him; and, being come unto him, he brings them unto the Father.

*Reflection* 1. You who are still strangers to God, who declare yourselves to be so, by living as strangers far off from him, do not still continue to abuse yourselves so grossly. Can you think any consolation yours that arises from the sufferings of Christ, while it is so evident they have not gained their end upon you, have not brought you to God? Truly, most of you seem to think that our Lord Jesus suffered rather to the end we might neglect God, and disobey him securely, than to restore us to him. Hath he purchased you a liberty to sin? Or is it not deliverance from sin, which alone is true liberty, the thing he aimed at, and agreed for, and laid down his life for?

2. Why let we his blood still run in vain as to us? He hath *by it opened up our way to God*, and yet we refuse to make use of it! Oh how few come in! Those who are brought unto God, and received into friendship with him, entertain that friendship, they delight in his company, love to be much with him: is it so with us? By being so near, they become like unto him, know his will better every day, and grow more conformable to it. But, alas! in the most, there is nothing of this.

3. But even they who are brought unto God may be faulty in this, in part, not applying so sweet a privilege. They can comply and be too friendly with the vain world, can pass many days without a lively communion with

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God, not aspiring to the increase of that, as the thing our Lord hath purchased for us, and that wherein all our happiness and welfare lie, here and hereafter. Your hearts are cleaving to folly; you are not delighting yourselves in the Lord, not refreshed with this nearness to him, and union with him; your thoughts are not often on it, nor is it your study to walk conformably to it: certainly it ought to be thus, and you should be persuaded to endeavor that it may be thus with you.

4. Remember this for your comfort, that as you are brought unto God by Jesus Christ, so you are kept in that union by him. It is a firmer knot than the first was; there is no power of hell can dissolve it. He suffered once to bring us once unto God, never to depart again. As he suffered once for all, so we are brought once for all. We may be sensibly nearer at one time than at another, but yet we can never be separate or cut off, being once knit by Christ, as the bond of our union. *Neither principalities, nor powers,* (&c.) *shall be able to separate us from the love of God,* because it holds *in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Rom. viii. 37, 38.

Secondly, as to the kind of our Lord's sufferings: *Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.*] The true life of a Christian, is, to eye Christ in every step of his life, both as his rule, and as his strength; looking to him as his pattern: both in doing and suffering, and drawing power from him for going through both; for the look of faith doth that, fetches life from Jesus to enable it for all, being without him able for nothing. Therefore the apostle doth still set this before his brethren; and having mentioned Christ's sufferings in general, the condition and end of it, he here specifies the particular kind of it, that which was the utmost point, *put to death in the flesh,* and then adds this issue out of it, *quickened by the Spirit.*

This is at once the strongest engagement, and the strongest encouragement. Was he, our Head, crowned with thorns, and shall the body look for garlands? Are we redeemed from hell and condemnation by him, and can any such refuse any service he calls them to? They who are *washed in the Lamb's blood, will follow him whithersoever he goes* (Rev. xiv. 4); and, following him through, they shall find their journey's end overpay all the troubles and sufferings of the way. *These are they,* said the elder who appeared in vision to John, *who came out of great tribulation:* tribulation and great tribulation, yet they came out of it, and gloriously too, arrayed in *long white robes!* The scarlet-strumpet (as follows in that book) died her garments red in the blood of the saints; but this is their happiness, that *their garments are washed white in the blood of the Lamb.* Revelations vii. 14.

Once take away sin, and all suffering is light. Now, that is done by this, *His once suffering for sin:* those who are in him shall hear no more of that as condemning them, binding over to suffer that wrath which is due to sin. Now, this puts an invincible strength into the soul for enduring all other things, how hard soever.

*Put to death.*] This is the utmost point, and that which men are most startled at, *to die:* and a violent death, *put to death;* and yet, he hath led in this way, who *is the Captain of our salvation. In the flesh.* Under this second phrase, his human nature, and his divine nature and power, are distinguished. *Put to death in the flesh,* is a very fit expression, not only (as is usual) taking the flesh for the whole manhood, but because death is most properly spoken of that very person, or his flesh. The whole man suffers death, a dissolution, or taking to pieces, and the soul suffers a separation, or dislodging; but death, or the privation of live and sense, belongs particularly to the flesh or body. But the *Spirit,* here opposed to the *flesh* or body, is certainly of a higher nature and power than is the human soul, which can not of itself return or reinhabit and quicken the body.

*Put to death.*] His death was both voluntary and violent. That same power which restored his life, could have kept it exempted from death; but the design was for death. He therefore took our flesh, to put it off thus, and to offer it up as a sacrifice, which, to be acceptable, must of necessity be free and voluntary; and, in that sense, he is said to have died even by that same Spirit, which here, in opposition to death, is said to quicken him. See Heb. ix. 14: *Through the Eternal Spirit, he offered himself without spot unto God.* They accounted it an ill-boding sign when the sacrifices came constrained to the altar, and drew back; and, on the contrary, were gladdened with the hopes of success when they came cheerfully forward; but never sacrifice came so willingly all the way, and from the first step knew whither he was going. Yet, because no other sacrifice would serve, he was most content to become one: *Sacrifices and burnt-offerings thou didst not desire: then said I, Lo, I come.* Psalm xl. 6, 7. He was not only a willing sacrifice, as Isaac, bound peaceably, and laid on the altar, but his own sacrificer. The beasts, if they came willingly, yet offered not themselves; but he *offered up himself;* and thus, not only by a willingness far above all those *sacrifices of bullocks and goats,* but *by the Eternal Spirit,* he offered up himself. Therefore he says, in this regard, *I lay down my life for my sheep;* it is not pulled from me, but I lay it down. And so it is often expressed by [ἀπέθανε] *he died;* and yet, this suits with it, [θανατωθεὶς] *put to death.* Yea, it was also expedient to be thus, that his death should be violent, and so, the more penal, to carry the more clear expression of a punishment, and such a violent death as had both ignominy and a curse tied to it, and this inflicted in a judicial way

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(though, as from the hands of men, most unjustly): that he should stand, and be judged, and condemned to death as a guilty person, carrying in that person the persons of so many who should otherwise have fallen under condemnation, as indeed guilty. *He was numbered with transgressors* (as the prophet hath it), *bearing the sins of many.* Isa. liii. *ult.*

Thus, then, there was, in his death, external violence joined with internal willingness. But what is there to be found but complications of wonders in our Lord Jesus? Oh! high inconceivable mystery of godliness! *God manifested in the flesh!* Nothing in this world so strange and sweet as that conjuncture, *God man, humanitas Dei!* What a strong foundation of friendship and union between the person of man and God, that their natures met in so close embraces in one Person! And, then, look on, and see so poor and despised an outward condition through his life, yet having hid under it the majesty of God, *all the brightness of the Father's glory!* And this is the top of all, that he was *put to death in the flesh;* the Lord of life dying, the Lord of glory clothed with shame! But it quickly appeared what kind of person it was that died, by this: *He was put to death,* indeed, *in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit!*

*Quickened.*] He was indeed too great a morsel for the grave to digest. For all its vast craving mouth and devouring appetite, crying, *Sheol, Give, give,* yet was it forced to give him up again, as the fish to give up the prophet Jonah, who, in that, was the figure of Christ. The chains of that prison are strong, but he was too strong a prisoner to be held by them; as our apostle hath in his sermon (Acts ii. 24), that it was *not possible that he should be kept by them.* They thought all was sure when they had rolled to the stone, and sealed it; that then the grave had indeed shut her mouth upon him; it appeared a done business to them, and looked as if it were very complete in his enemies' eyes, and very desperate to his friends, his poor disciples and followers. Were they not near the point of giving over, when they said, *This is the third day,* &c., and *We thought this had been he that should have delivered Israel?* Luke xxiv. 21. And yet, he was then with them, who was indeed the *deliverer* and *salvation of Israel.* That rolling of the stone to the grave, was as if they had rolled it toward the east in the night, to stop the rising of the sun the next morning; much further above all their watches and their power was this *Sun of Righteousness* in his rising again. That body which was entombed was united to the spring of life, the Divine Spirit of the Godhead that quickened it.

*Reflection* 1. Thus the church, which is likewise his body, when it seems undone, when it is brought to the lowest posture and state, yet, by virtue of that mystical union with Jesus Christ (as his natural body, by personal union with his Deity), shall be preserved from destruction, and shall be delivered and raised in due time. Yea, as he was nearest his exaltation in the lowest step of his humiliation, so is it with his church: when things are brought to the most hopeless appearance, then shall light arise out of darkness. *Cum duplicantur lateres venit Moses.*

Therefore, as we ought to seek a more humble sense of Sion's distress, so we should also be solicitous not to let go this hope, that her mighty Lord will, in the end, be glorious in her deliverance, and that all her sufferings and low estate shall be as a dark ground to set off the lustre of her restoration, when the Lord shall visit her with salvation; as in the rising of Jesus Christ, his almighty power and Deity were more manifested than if he had not died. And therefore we may say confidently, with the psalmist to his Lord. Psalm lxxi. 20: *Thou who hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up from the depths of the earth: Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.* Yea, the church comes more beautiful out of the deepest distress: let it be overwhelmed with waves, yet it sinks not, but rises up as only washed. And in this confidence we ought to rejoice, even in the midst of our sorrows; and, though we live not to see them, yet, even in beholding afar off, to be gladdened with the great things the Lord will do for his church in the latter times. He will certainly *make bare his holy arm in the eyes of the nations,* and *all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.* Isa. lii. 10. His King whom he *hath set on his holy hill,* shall grow in his conquests and glory, and all that rise against him *shall he break with a rod of iron.* Psalm ii. He was humbled once, but his glory shall be for ever. *As many were astonished at him, his visage being marred more than any man,* they shall be as much astonished at his beauty and glory: *So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him.* Isa. lii. 14, 15. According as here we find that remarkable evidence of his divine power in rising from the dead: *put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.*

*Ref.* 2. Thus may a believing soul at the lowest, when, to its own sense, it is given over unto death, and swallowed up of it, as it were *in the belly of hell,* yet look up to this divine power. He whose soul was not left there, will not leave thine there. Yea, when thou art most sunk in thy sad apprehensions, and far off to thy thinking, then is he nearest to raise and comfort thee; as sometimes it grows darkest immediately before day. Rest on his power and goodness, which never failed any who did so. *It is he* (as David says) *who lifts up the soul from the gates of death.* Psalm ix. 13.

*Ref.* 3. Would any of you be cured of that common disease, the fear of death? Look this way, and you shall find more than you

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seek; you shall be taught, not only to fear, but to love it. Consider, 1. His death: *he died.* By that, thou who receivest him as thy life, mayest be sure of this, that thou art, by that his death, freed from the second death. *Descendit huc vita nostra, et tulit mortem nostram, et occidit eam de abundantia vitæ suæ:* He who is our life, says Augustine, descended hither, and bore our death, killing it by the abounding of his life. And that is the great point. Let that have the name which was given to the other, *the most terrible of all terrible things;* and, as the second death is removed, this death which thou art to pass through, is, I may say, beautified and sweetened; the ugly visage of it becomes amiable, when ye look on it in Christ, and in his death; that puts such a pleasing comeliness upon it, that whereas others fly from it with affright, the believer can not choose but embrace it. He longs to lie down in that bed of rest, since his Lord lay in it, and hath warmed that cold bed and purified it with his fragrant body. 2. But especially be looking forward to his return thence, *quickened by the Spirit;* this being to those who are in him the certain pledge, yea, the effectual cause, of that blessed resurrection which is in their hopes. There is that union betwixt them, that they shall rise by the communication and virtue of his rising; not simply by his power, for so the wicked to their grief shall be raised, but they by his life, as theirs. Therefore it is so often reiterated, John vi., where he speaks of himself as the *living* and *life-giving bread* to believers, *I will raise them up at the last day.* This comfort we have even for the house of clay we lay down; and as for our more considerable part, our immortal souls, this his death and rising hath provided for them, at their dislodging, an entrance into that glory where he is. Now, if these things were lively apprehended and laid hold on, Christ made ours, and the first resurrection manifest in us, were we quickened by his Spirit to newness of life, certainly there would not be a more welcome and refreshing thought, nor a sweeter discourse to us, than that of death. And no matter for the kind of it. Were it a violent death, so was his. Were it what we account most judgment-like among diseases, the plague; was not his death very painful? And was it not an accursed death? And by that curse endured by him in his, is not the curse taken away to the believer? Oh how welcome will that day be, that day of deliverance! To be out of this woful prison, I regard not at what door I go out, being at once freed from so many deaths, and let in to enjoy him who is my life.

VER. 19. By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

VER. 20. Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water.

VER. 21. The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

THERE is nothing that so much concerns a Christian to know, as the excellency of Jesus Christ, his person and works; so that it is always pertinent to insist much on that subject. The apostle, having spoken of this Spirit or divine nature, and the power of it, as raising him from the dead, takes occasion to speak of another work of that Spirit, to wit, the emission and publishing of his divine doctrine; and that, not as a new thing following his death and rising, but as the same in substance with that which was, by the same Spirit, promulgated long before, even to the first inhabitants of the world. *Quickened by the Spirit,* that is, in our days, says the apostle; but then, long before that, by the same Spirit, *he went and preached to the spirits in prison.*

This place is somewhat obscure in itself, but as it usually happens, made more so by the various fancies and contests of interpreters, aiming or pretending to clear it. These I like never to make a noise of. They who dream of the *descent of Christ's soul into hell,* think this place sounds somewhat that way; but, being examined, it proves no way suitable, nor can, by the strongest wrestling, be drawn to fit their purpose. For, 1. That it was to preach, he went thither, they are not willing to avow; though the end they assign is as groundless and imaginary as this is. 2. They would have his business to be with the spirits of the faithful deceased before his coming; but here we see it is with the disobedient. And, 3. His spirit here is the same with the sense of the foregoing words, which mean not his soul, but his eternal Deity. 4. Nor is it *the spirits that were in prison,* as they read it, but *the spirits in prison,* which, by the opposition of their former condition, *sometime,* or *formerly disobedient,* doth clearly speak their present condition, as the just consequence and fruit of their disobedience.

Other misinterpretations I mention not, taking it as agreeable to the whole strain of the apostle's words,* that Jesus Christ did,

* Thus I then thought, but do now apprehend another sense, as probable, if not more, even that so much rejected by most interpreters: the mission of the Spirit, and preaching of the gospel by it, after his resurrection, preaching to sinners, and converting them, according to the prophecy which he first fulfilled in person, and, after, more amply, in his apostles. That prophecy I mean, Isa. lx. 1. The Spirit came upon him, and it was sent from him on his apostles, to preach to *spirits in prison; to preach liberty to those captives,* captive spirits, and therefore called *spirits in prison,* to illustrate the thing the more, by opposition to that spirit of Christ, *the spirit of liberty,* setting them free. And this is to show the greater efficacy of Christ's preaching, than of Noah's; though he was a signal preacher of righteousness, yet only himself and his family, eight persons, were saved by him; but multitudes of all nations by the spirit and preaching of Christ in the gospel; and that by the seal of



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before his appearing in the flesh, speak by his spirit in his servants to those of the foregoing ages, yea, the most ancient of them, declaring to them the way of life, though rejected by the unbelief of the most part. This is interjected in the mentioning of Christ's sufferings and exaltation after them. And, after all, the apostle returns to that again, and to the exhortation which he strengthens by it: but so as that this discourse taken in, is pertinently adapted to the present subject. The apostle's aim in it we may conceive to be this (his main scope being to encourage his brethren in the faith of Christ, and the way of holiness, against all opposition and hardship), so to instruct his brethren in Christ's perpetual influence into his church in all ages, even before his incarnation, as that they might, at the same time, see the great unbelief of the world, yea, their opposing of Divine truth, and the small number of those who receive it, and so not be discouraged by the fewness of their number, and the hatred of the world, finding that salvation in Jesus Christ, dead and risen again, which the rest miss of by their own wilful refusal. And this very point he insists on clearly in the following chapter, ver. 3, 4. And the very ways of ungodliness there specified, which believers renounce, were those that the world was guilty of in those days, and in which they were surprised by the flood: *They ate and drank till the flood came upon them.*

In the words of these three verses, we have three things: First, An assertion concerning the preaching of Christ, and the persons he preached to. Secondly, The designation and description of the time or age wherein that was, and the particular way of God's dealing with them. Thirdly, The adapting or applying of this example to Christians.—First, the assertion concerning the preaching of Christ, and the persons he preached to, in these words, which I take together, *By the which spirit he went and preached to the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient.*

In these words we have a preacher and his hearers. With regard to the preacher, we shall find here, 1st. His ability. 2dly. His activity in the use of it.

1st. His ability is altogether singular and matchless, the very spring of all abilities, the Spirit of wisdom himself, being the coeternal Son of God. That Spirit he preached by, was the same as that by which he raised himself from the dead; and without this Spirit there is no preaching. Now he was, as our apostle calls him, *a preacher of righteousness*, but it was by the power of this Spirit; for in him did this Spirit preach. The Son is the wisdom of the Father, his name is The Word; not only for that by him *all things were created*, as John hath it, John i. 4, the Son being that power by which, as by the word of his mouth, all things were made; but he is *The Word*, likewise, *as revealing the Father*, declaring to us the counsel and will of God: therefore he is, by the same evangelist, in the same place, called that *Light which illuminates the world*, John i. 9, without which, man, called the lesser world, the intellectual world, were as the greater world without the sun. And all who bring aright the doctrine of saving wisdom, derive it necessarily from him; all preachers draw from this sovereign preacher, as the fountain of Divine light. As all the planets receive their light from the sun, and by that diffusing itself among them, it is not diminished in the sun, but only communicated to them, remaining still full and entire in it as its source; thus doth the Spirit flow from Christ, in a particular degree, unto those he sends forth in his name, and is in them that he preaches by the power and light of his eternal spirit.

Hither, then, must all those come who would be rightly supplied and enabled for that work. It is impossible to speak duly of him in any measure, but by his Spirit; there must be particular access, and a receiving of instructions from him, and a transfusion of his Spirit into ours. Oh! were it thus with us, how sweet were it to speak of him! To be much in prayer, much in dependance on him, and drawing from him, would do much more in this, than reading and studying, seeking after arts, and tongues, and common knowledge. These, indeed, are not to be despised nor neglected. *Utilis lectio, utilis eruditio, sed magis unctio necessaria, quippe quæ sola docet de omnibus*, says Bernard: *Reading is good, and learning good, but above all, anointing is necessary, that anointing that teacheth all things.* And you who are for your own interest, be earnest with this Lord, this Fountain of Spirit, to let forth more of it upon his messengers in these times. You would receive back the fruit of it, were ye busy this way; you would find more life and refreshing sweetness in the word of life, how weak and worthless soever they were who brought it; it should descend as sweet showers upon the valleys, and make them fruitful.

2d. We have the activity of Christ as a preacher. By this spirit, it is said here, *He preached.* Not only did he so in the days of his abode on earth, but in all times, both before and after. He never left his church altogether destitute of saving light, which he dispensed himself, and conveyed by the hands of his servants; therefore it is said, *He preached*, that this may be no excuse for times after he is ascended into heaven, no, nor for times before he descended to the earth in human flesh. Though he preached not then, nor does now in his flesh, yet *by his Spirit* he then preached, and still doth; so that according to what was chief in him, he was stil.

baptism, the resurrection of Christ being represented in the return from the water, and our dying with him, by immersion; and that figure of baptism is like their ark

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present with his church, and preaching in it, and is so to the end of the world, this his infinite Spirit being everywhere. Yet, it is said here, by which *he went and preached*, signifying the remarkable clearness of his administration that way. As when he appears eminently in any work of his own, or in taking notice of our works, God is said to come down (as in reference to those cities of Babel and Sodom, *Let us go down*, and *I will go down and see*, Genesis xi. 5, 7; xviii. 21; so Exod. iii. 8, *I am come down to deliver Israel*); thus here, so clearly did he admonish them by Noah, coming, as it were, himself, on purpose to declare his mind to them. And this word, I conceive, is the rather used to show what equality there is in this. He came, indeed, visibly, and dwelt among men, when he became flesh; yet, before that, he visited them by his Spirit; he went by that, and preached. And so, in after-times, himself being ascended, and not having come visibly in his flesh to all, but to the Jews only, yet, in the preaching of the apostles to the Gentiles, as the great apostle says of him in that expression, Eph. ii. 17, *He came and preached to you which were afar off*. And this he continues to do in the ministry of his word; and therefore, says he, *He that despiseth you, despiseth me*. Luke x. 16.

Were this considered, it could not but procure far more respect to the word, and more acceptance of it. Would you think that, in his word, Christ speaks by his eternal Spirit, yea, that he comes and preaches, addresses himself particularly to you in it: could you slight him thus, and turn him off with daily refusals, or delays at least? Think, it is too long you have so unworthily used so great a Lord, who brings unto you so great salvation; who came once in so wonderful a way to work that salvation for us in his flesh, and is still coming to offer it unto us by his Spirit; who does himself preach to us, telling us what he undertook on our behalf, and how he hath performed all, and that now nothing rests but that we receive him, and believe on him, and all is ours. But alas! from the most the return is, what we have here—*disobedience*.

*Which sometime were disobedient.*] There are two things in these hearers, by which they are characterized: their present condition in the time the apostle was speaking of them, *spirits in prison*, and their former disposition, when the Spirit of Christ was preaching to them, *sometime disobedient*. This latter went first in time, and was the cause of the other; therefore, of it first.

1. *Sometime disobedient.*] If you look to their visible subordinate preacher, you find he was a holy man, and an able and diligent preacher of righteousness, both in his doctrine, and in the track of his life, which is the most powerful preaching; on both which accounts it seems strange that he prevailed so little. But it appears much more so, if we look higher, even to this height at which the apostle points, that almighty *Spirit of Christ* who preached to them. And yet, they were disobedient! The word is [ἀπειθήσασι], *they were not persuaded*; it signifies both unbelief and disobedience, and that very fitly, unbelief being in itself the grand disobedience: it is the mind's not yielding to Divine truth, and so the spring of all disobedience in affection and action. And this *root of bitterness*, this unbelief, is deeply fastened in our natural hearts; and without a change in them, a taking them to pieces, they can not be good. It is as a tree firmly rooted, which can not be plucked up without loosening the ground round about it. And this accursed root brings forth fruit unto death, because the word is not believed, neither the threats of the law, nor the promises of the gospel; therefore men cleave unto their sins, and speak peace unto themselves while they are under the curse.

It may seem very strange that the gospel is so fruitless among us; yea, that neither word nor rod, both preaching aloud to us the doctrine of humiliation and repentance, persuades any man to return, or so much as to turn inward, and question himself, to say, "What have I done?" But thus it will be, till the Spirit be poured from on high, to open and soften hearts. This is to be desired, as much wanting in the ministry of the word; but were it there, that would not serve, unless it were by a concurrent work within the heart meeting the word, and making the impressions of it there: for here we find the Spirit went and preached; and yet, the spirits of the hearers still remained unbelieving and disobedient. It is therefore a combined work of this Spirit in the preacher and the hearers, that makes it successful, otherwise it is but shouting in a dead man's ear; there must be *something within*, as one said in a like case.

2. *To the spirits in prison.*] That is now their posture; and because he speaks of them as in that posture, he calls them spirits; for it is their spirits that are in that prison. He likewise calls them spirits to whom the Spirit of Christ preached, because it is indeed that which the preaching of the word aims at; it hath to do with the spirits of men. It is not content to be at their ear with a sound, but works on their minds and spirits some way, either to believe and receive, or to be hardened and sealed up to judgment by it, which is for rebels. If disobedience follow on the preaching of that word, *the prison* follows on that disobedience; and that word, by which they would not be bound to obedience, binds them over to that prison, whence they shall never escape, nor be released for ever.

Take notice of it, and know that you are warned, you who will not receive salvation, offering, pressing itself upon you. You are every day in that way of disobedience, hastening to this perpetual imprisonment.

Consider, you now sit and hear this word; so did those who are here spoken of: they had their time on earth, and much patience was

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used toward them. And though you are not to be swept away by a flood of waters, yet you are daily carried on by the flood of time and mortality. Psalm xc. 5. And how soon you shall be on the other side, and sent into eternity, you know not. I beseech you, be yet wise; hearken to the offers yet made you; for in his name I yet once again make a tender of Jesus Christ, and salvation in him, to all that will let go their sins, to lay hold on him. Oh! do not destroy yourselves. You are in prison; he proclaims unto you liberty. Christ is still following us himself with treaties. *Clamans dictis, factis, morte, vita, descensu, ascensu, clamans ut redeamus ad eum:* (Augustine): Crying aloud by his words, by his deeds, by his death, by his life, by his coming down from heaven, by his ascension into it, crying to us to return to him. Christ proclaims your liberty, and will you not accept of it? Think, though you are pleased with your present thraldom and prison, it reserves you (if you come not forth) to this other prison, that shall not please you: these chains of spiritual darkness in which you are, unless you be freed, will deliver you up to the *chains of everlasting darkness*, wherein these hopeless prisoners are *kept to the judgment of the great day*. But if you will receive Jesus Christ presently upon that, life, and liberty, and blessedness, are made yours. *If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed.* John viii. 35.

*When once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah.*] There are two main continuing wonders in the world, the bounty of God, and the disloyalty of man; and the succession of times is nothing but new editions of these two. One grand example is here set before us, an œcumenical example, as large as the whole world; on the part of God much patience, and yet, on man's part, invincible disobedience. Here are two things in the instance. 1*st*, The Lord's general dealing with the world of the ungodly at that time. 2*dly*, His peculiar way with his own chosen, Noah and his family: he waited patiently for all the rest, but he effectually saved them.

Observe, first, The *time* designated thus, *In the days of Noah.* There were many great and powerful persons in those days, who overtopped (no doubt) in outward respects; as, in their stature, the proud giants. And they begot children, *mighty men of old, men of renown*, as the text hath it, Gen. vi. 3; and yet, as themselves perished in the flood, so their names are drowned. They had their big thoughts, certainly, that their houses and *their names* should *continue*, as the psalmist speaks (Psalm xlix. 11), and yet they are sunk in perpetual oblivion; while Noah's name, who walked in humble obedience, you see in these most precious records of God's own book, still looks fresh, and smells sweet, and hath this honor, that the very age of the world is marked with this name, to be known by it: *In the days of Noah.* That when profane ambitious persons do idolatrously seek after, they are often remarkably disappointed of. They would have their names memorable and famous, yet they rot; they are either buried with them, or remembered with disgrace, rotting above ground, as carcasses uninterred, and so are the more noisome; it being as little credit to them to be mentioned, as for Pilate that his name is in the confession of faith. But the name and remembrance of the righteous is still sweet and delightful; as the name of Abraham the father of the faithful, and those of Isaac and Jacob: their names are embalmed indeed, so that they can not rot, embalmed with God's own name [*Eternal*], THAT name being wrapped about theirs, *the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*

Thus is Noah here meationed as preferred of God; and so, in the second epistle, as *a preacher of righteousness*, and Hebrews xi., among those worthies whose honor is, that *they believed.* This is only a name, a small thing, not to be mentioned in comparison of their other privileges, and especially of that venerable life and glory which they are heirs to; and indeed it is a thing they regard very little; yet, this we see, that even this advantage follows them, and flies from the vain and ungodly who haunt and pursue it.

The Lord's dealing with the wicked in those times, before he swept them away by the deluge, is represented in these two particulars: 1. Long-suffering, and withal, 2. Clear warning.

1. Long-suffering—long forbearing to be angry, as the Hebrew word is in the proclamation of the Divine name, Exodus xxxiv. 6, which supposes a great provocation, and the continuance of it, and yet patience continuing. And in this appears the goodness of God: considering how hateful sin is to him, and how powerful he is to punish it, how easy were it, if it pleased him, in one moment to cut off all the ungodly, high and low, throughout the whole world! Yet he bears, and forbears to punish! Oh! what a world of sin is every day committed in nations, in cities, and villages, yea, in families, which he doth not strike with present judgments, and not only forbears to punish, but multiplies his common mercies on them, *sun and rain and fruitful seasons.* Acts xiv. 17.

Yea, there is so much of this, that it falls under a gross misconstruction; yet, he bears that too. *Because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.* Eccles. viii. 11. Because there is not so much as *a word* of it for the time (so the word is), this swells and fills the heart of man, and makes it *big to do evil.* And not only is the Lord's long-suffering mistaken by the ungodly, but even by his own, who should understand him better, and know the true sense of his ways, yet sometimes they are misled in this point: beholding his forbearance of punishing the workers of iniquity, in-

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stead of magnifying his patience, they run very near into questioning his justice and providence. See Psalm xiii., Jer. xii., Job xx., &c. Our narrow, hasty spirits, left to their own measures, take not in those larger views that would satisfy us in respect to the ways of God, and forget the immense largeness of his wise designs, his deep reach from one age to another, yea, from eternity to eternity. We consider not, 1. How easily he can right himself, in point of justice, when he will; that none can make escape from him, how loose soever their guard seem, and how great liberty soever appears in their present condition. *Nemo decoquit huic creditori.* 2. That as he can most easily, so he will most seasonably, be known in executing judgment; and that his justice shall shine the brighter, by all that patience he hath used, by the sun of prosperity. 3. We think not how little that time is to him, which seems long to us, to whom *a thousand years are as one day.* It seemed a long time of the church's distress and their enemies' triumph, in those seventy years of the Babylonish captivity; and yet, in God's language, it is spoken of as *a moment, a small moment,* Isa. liv. 7. However, in the issue, the Lord always clears himself. He is indeed long-suffering and patient, but the impenitent abusers of his patience pay interest for all the time of that forbearance, in the weight of judgment when it comes upon them. But thus, we see, the Lord deals. Thus he dealt with the world in the beginning, *when all flesh had corrupted their way; yet* saith he, *their days shall be one hundred and twenty years.* Gen. vi. 3.

Let us learn to curb and cool our brisk humors toward even stubborn sinners. Be grieved at their sin, for that is your duty; but think it not strange, nor fret at it, that they continue to abuse the long-suffering of God, and yet, that he continues ever abused by suffering them. Zeal is good, but as it springs from love, if it be right, so it is requited by love, and carries the impressions of it: of love to God, and so, a complacency in his way, liking it because it is his; and of love to men, so as to be pleased with that waiting for them, in the possibility, at least, of their being reclaimed; knowing that, however, if they return not, yet the Lord will not lose his own at their hands. *Wilt thou,* said those two fiery disciples, *that we call for fire, as Elias?* Oh! but the spirit of the dove rested on him who told them, *They knew not what spirit they were of.* Luke ix. 55, *q. d.:* You speak of Elias, and you think you are of his spirit in this motion, but you mistake yourselves; this comes from another spirit than you imagine. Instead of looking for such sudden justice without you, look inward, and see whence that is: examine and correct that within you.

When you are tempted to take ill that goodness and patience of God to sinners, consider, 1. Can this be right, to differ from his mind in anything? Is it not our only wisdom and ever safe rule, to think as he thinks, and will as he wills? And I pray you, does he not hate sin more than you do? Is not his interest in punishing it deeper than yours? And if you be zealous for his interest, as you pretend, then be so with him, and in his way; for starting from that, surely you are wrong. Consider, 2. Did he not wait for thee? What had become of thee, if long-suffering had subserved his purpose of further mercy, of free pardon to thee? And why wilt thou not always allow that to which thou art so much obliged? Wouldst thou have the bridge cut, because thou art so over? Surely thou wilt not own so gross a thought. Therefore, esteem thy God still the more, as thou seest the more of his long-suffering to sinners; and learn for him, and with him, to bear and wait.

2. But this was not a dumb forbearance, such as may serve for a surprise, but continual teaching and warning were joined with it, as remarked before. We see, they wanted not preaching of the choicest kind. He, the *Son of God,* by his Eternal *Spirit, went and preached to them;* it was his truth in Noah's mouth. And with that, we have a continued real sermon, expressed in this verse, *While the ark was preparing:* that spoke God's mind, and every knock (as the usual observation is) of the hammers and tools used in building, preached to them, threatening aloud designed judgment, and exhorting to prevent it. And therefore that word is added, ἀπεξεχετο, that the long-suffering of God *waited,* or expected; expected a believing of his word, and a returning from their wickedness. But we see no such thing followed; they took their own course still, and therefore the Lord took his. They had polluted the earth with their wickedness; now the Lord would have the cleansing by repentance; that being denied, it must be another way, by a flood. And because they and their sins remained one, they would not part with them, therefore was one work made of both; they and their sins, as inseparable, must be cleansed away together.

Thus impenitency under much long-suffering, makes judgment full and complete. I appeal to you, hath not the Lord used much forbearance toward us? Hath he not patiently spared us, and clearly warned us, and waited long for the fruit of all? Hath anything been wanting? Have not temporal mercies been multiplied on us? Have not the spiritual riches of the gospel been opened up to us?

And each of you, for yourselves, consider how it is with you after so much long-suffering of God, which none of you can deny he hath used toward you, and so many gracious invitations, with that patience. Have they gained your hearts, or do you still remain servants to sin, still strangers to him, and formal worshippers? I beseech you, think on it, what will be the issue of that course. Is it a light matter to you, *to die in your sins,* and to have *the wrath of God abiding on you?*

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to have refused Christ so often, and that after you have been so often requested to receive salvation? After the Lord hath followed you with entreaties, hath called to you so often, *Why will ye die?* yet, wilfully to perish, and withal to have all these entreaties come in and accuse you, and make your burden heavier? Would you willingly die in this estate? If not, then think that yet he is waiting, if at length you will return. This one day more of his waiting you have, and of his speaking to you; and some who were here with you the last day, are taken away since. *Oh, that we were wise, and would consider our latter end!* Though there were neither sword nor pestilence near you, you must die, and, for anything you know, quickly. Why wear you out the day of grace and those precious seasons still, as uncertain of Christ, yea, as undiligent after him, as you were long ago? As you love your souls, be more serious in their business. This was the undoing of the sinners we are speaking of; they were all for present things. *They ate and drank, they married*, in a continued course, without ceasing, and without minding their after-estate. Luke xvii. 27. They were drowned in these things, and that drowned them in a flood. Noah did also eat and drink, but his main work was, during that time, the preparing of the ark. The necessities of this life the children of God are tied to, and forced to bestow some time and pains on them; but the thing that takes up their hearts, that which the bent of their souls is set on, is their interest in Jesus Christ: and all your wise designs are but a pleasing madness, till this be chief with you. Others have had as much of God's patience, and as fair opportunity, as you, whose souls and Christ had never met, and now know that they never shall. They had their time of worldly projects and enjoyment, as you now have, and followed them, as if they had been immortally to abide with them; but they are passed away as a shadow, and we are posting after them, and within awhile shall lie down in the dust. Oh! how happy they whose hearts are not here, trading with vanity and gathering vexation, but whose thoughts are on that blessed life above trouble! Certainly, they who pass for fools in the world, are the only *children of wisdom*, they who have renounced their lusts and their own wills, have yielded up themselves to Jesus, taking him for their King, and have their minds resting on him as their salvation.

*While the ark was a preparing.*] Observe, the delay of the Lord's determined judgment on the ungodly, was indeed long-suffering toward them, but here was more in it to Noah and his family; the providing for their preservation, and, till that was completed for them, the rest were spared. Thus, the very forbearance which the ungodly do enjoy, is usually involved with the interest of the godly; something of that usually goes into it; and so it is in a great part for their sakes, that the rest are both spared and furnished with common mercies. The saints are usually the scorn and contempt of others, yet are they, by that love the Lord carries toward them, the very arches and pillars of states, and kingdoms, and families, where they are, yea, of the world (*Semen sanctum statumen terræ*), the frame whereof is continued mainly in regard to them. Isa. vi. 13. But they who are ungrateful to the great Maker and Upholder of it, and regardless of him, what wonder if they take no notice of the advantage they receive by the concernment of his children in the world? Observe here,

I. The work. II. The end of it. I. In the work, the preparing of the ark, observe, 1st, God's appointment; 2dly, Noah's obedience.

1*st*. It was God's appointment. His power was not tied to this, yet his wisdom chose it. He who steered the course of this ark safely all that time, could have preserved those he designed it for without it; but thus it pleases the Lord, usually, to mix his most wonderful deliverances with some selected means; exercising, in that way, our obedience in their use, yet so as that the singular power of his hand in them, whereon faith rests, doth clearly appear, doing by them what, in a more natural way, they could not possibly effect.

2*dly*. For the obedience of Noah, if we should insist on the difficulties, both in this work and in the way of their preservation by it, it would look the clearer, and be found very remarkable. Considering the length of the work, the great pains in providing materials, especially considering the opposition that probably he met with in it from the profane about him, the mightier of them, or, at least, the hatred and continual scoffs of all sorts, it required principles of an invincible resolution to go through with it. What (would they say) means this old dotard to do? Whither this monstrous voyage? And inasmuch as it spoke, as no doubt he told them, their ruin and his safety, this would incense them so much the more. You look far before you, and what! shall we all perish, and you alone escape? But through all, the sovereign command and gracious promise of his God carried him, regarding their scoffs and threats as little in making the ark, as he did afterward the noise of the waters about it, when he was sitting safe within it. This his obedience, having indeed so boisterous winds to encounter, had need of a well-fastened root, that it might stand and hold out against them all, and so it had. The apostle St. Paul tells us what the root of it was: *By faith being warned of God, he prepared an ark.* Heb. xi. 7. And there is no living and lasting obedience but what springs from that root. He believed what the Lord spake of his determined judgment on the ungodly world, and from the belief of that arose that holy fear which is expressly mentioned, Heb. xi. 7, as exciting

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him to this work; and he believed the word of promise, which the Lord spake concerning his preservation by the ark: and the belief of these two carried him strongly on to the work, and through it, against all counter-blasts and opposition; overcame both his own doubtings and the mockings of the wicked, while he still looked to him who was the master and contriver of the work.

Till we attain such a fixed view of our God, and such firm persuasion, of his truth, and power, and goodness, it will never be right with us; there will be nothing but wavering and unsettledness in our spirits and in our ways. Every little discouragement from within or from without, that meets us, will be likely to turn us over. We shall not walk in an even course, but still be reeling and staggering, till faith be set wholly upon its own basis, the proper foundation of it: not set between two upon one strong prop, and another that is rotten, partly on God, and partly on creature helps and encouragements, or our own strength. Our only safe and happy way is, in humble obedience, in his own strength to follow his appointments, without standing and questioning the matter, and to resign the conduct of all to his wisdom and love; to put the rudder of our life into his hand, to steer the course of it as seemeth him good, resting quietly on his word of promise for our safety. Lord, whither thou wilt, and which way thou wilt, be thou my guide, and it sufficeth.

This absolute following of God, and trusting him with all, is marked as the true character of faith in Abraham; his going after God away from his country, *not knowing*, nor asking *whither he went*, secure in his guide. And so, in that other greater point of offering his Son, he silenced all disputes about it, by that mighty conclusion of faith, *accounting that he was able to raise him from the dead.* Heb. xi. 8, 19. These it is said, v. 7, *By faith, Noah prepared the ark.* He did not argue and question, How shall this be done, and if it were, how shall I get all the kinds of beasts gathered together to put into it, and how shall it be ended, when we are shut in? No, but he believed firmly that it should be finished by him, and he be saved by it; and he was not disappointed.

II. The end of this work was the *saving of* Noah and his family from the general deluge, wherein all the rest perished.

Here it will be fit to consider the point of the preservation of the godly in ordinary and common calamities, briefly in these positions.

1. It is certain that the children of God, as they are not exempted from the common, universal calamities and evils of this life, which befall the rest of men, so not from any particular kind of them. As it is *appointed* for them, with all others, *once to die*, so we find them not privileged from any kind of disease, or other way of death; not from falling by sword, or by pestilence, or in the phrensy of a fever, or any kind of sudden death: yea, when these, or such like, are on a land by way of public judgment, the godly are not altogether exempted from them, but may fall in them with others; as we find Moses dying in the wilderness with those he brought out of Egypt. Now though it was for a particular failing in the wilderness, yet it evinces, that there is in this no infringement upon their privileges, nothing contrary to the love of God toward them, and his covenant with them.

2. The promises made to the godly of preservation, from common judgments, have their truth, and are made good in many of them who are so preserved, though they do not hold absolutely and universally. For they are ever to be understood in subordination to their highest good; but when they are preserved, they ought to take it as a gracious accomplishment even of these promises to them, which the wicked, many of whom do likewise escape, have no right to, but are preserved for after judgment.

3. It is certain that the curse and sting is taken out of all those evils incident to the godly with others, in life and death, which makes the main difference, though to the eye of the world invisible. And it may be observed, that in those common judgments of sword, or pestilence, or other epidemic diseases, a great part of those who are cut off are of the wickedest, though the Lord may send of those arrows to some few of his own, to call them home.

The full and clear distinction of the godly and the wicked, being reserved for their after-estate in eternity, it needs not seem strange, that in many things it appears not here. One thing above all others most grievous to the child of God, may take away the wonder of other things they suffer in common, that is, the remainders of sin in them while they are in the flesh: though there is a spirit in them above it, and contrary to it, which makes the difference, yet, sometimes the too much likeness, especially in the prevailings of corruption, doth confuse the matter, not only to others' eyes, but to their own.

4. Though the great distinction and severing be reserved to that great and solemn day, which shall clear all, yet the Lord is pleased, in part, more remarkably at sometimes to distinguish his own from the ungodly, in the execution of temporal judgments, and to give these as preludes of that final and full judgment. And this instance of Noah was one of the most eminent in that kind, being the most general judgment that ever befell the world, or that shall befall it till the last, and so the liveliest figure of it; this was by water, as the second shall be by fire. It was most congruous that it should resemble it in this, as the chief point: the saving of righteous Noah and his family from it, prefiguring the eternal salvation of believers, as our apostle teacheth.

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*Wherein few, that is, eight persons, were saved by water.*] This great point of the fewness of those who are saved in the other greater salvation, as in this I shall not now prosecute: only,

1. If so few, then, the inquiry into ourselves, whether we be of these few, should be more diligent, and followed more home, than it is as yet with the most of us. We are wary in our trifles, and only in this easily deceived, yea, our own deceivers in this great point. Is not this folly far beyond what you usually say of some, *Penny wise and pound foolish;* to be wise for a moment, and fools for eternity?

2. You who are indeed seeking the way of life, be not discouraged by your fewness. It hath always been so. You see here, how few of the whole world were saved. And is it not better to be of the few in the ark, than of the multitude in the waters? Let them fret as ordinarily they do, to see so few more diligent for heaven; as no doubt they did in the case of Noah. And this is what galls them, that any should have higher names and surer hopes this way: What! are none but such as you going to heaven? Think you all of us damned? What can we say, but that there is a flood of wrath awaiting many, and certainly, all that are out of the ark shall perish in it.

3. This is that main truth that I would leave with you: look on Jesus Christ as the ark, of whom this was a figure, and believe it, out of him there is nothing but certain destruction, a deluge of wrath, all the world over, on those who are out of Christ. Oh! it is our life, our only safety, to be in him. But these things are not believed. Men think they believe them, and do not. Were it believed, that we are under the sentence of eternal death in our natural state, and that there is no escape but by removing out of ourselves unto Christ, Oh, what thronging would there be to him! Whereas, now, he invites, and calls, and how few are persuaded to come to him! Noah believed the Lord's word of judgment against the world, believed his promise made to him, and prepared an ark. Is it not a high sign of unbelief, that, there being an ark of everlasting salvation ready prepared to our hand, we will not so much as come to it? Will you be persuaded certainly, that the ark-door stands open? His offers are free; do but come and try if he will turn you away. No, he will not: *Him that comes to me, I will in no wise cast out.* John vi. 37. And as there is such acceptance and sure preservation in him, there is as sure perishing without him, trust on what you will. Be you of a giant's stature (as many of them were), to help you to climb up (as they would surely do when the flood came on) to the highest mountains and tallest trees, yet, it shall overtake you. Make your best of your worldly advantages, or good parts, or civil righteousness, all shall prove poor shifts from the flood of wrath which rises above all these, and drowns them. Only the ark of our salvation is safe Think how gladly they would have been within the ark, when they found death without it; and now it was too late! How would many who now despise Christ, wish to honor him one day! Men, so long as they thought to be safe on the earth, would never betake them to the ark, would think it a prison; and could men find salvation anywhere else, they would never come to Christ for it: this is because they know him not. But yet, be i necessity, let that drive thee in; and then being in him, thou shalt find reason to love him for himself, besides the salvation thou hast in him.

You who have fled into him for refuge, wrong him not so far as to question your safety. What though the floods of thy former guiltiness rise high, thine Ark shall still be above them: and the higher they rise, the higher he shall rise, shall have the more glory in freely justifying and saving thee. Though thou find the remaining power of sin still within thee, yet it shall not sink thine ark. There was in this ark sin, yet they were saved from the flood. If thou dost believe, that puts thee in Christ, and he will bring thee safe through without splitting or sinking.

As thou art bound to account thyself safe in him, so to admire that love which set thee there. Noah was a holy man: but whence were both his holiness and his preservation while the world perished, but because *he found favor* or *free grace*, as the word is, in the eyes of the Lord? And no doubt, he did much contemplate this, being secure within, when the cries of the rest drowning were about him. Thus think thou; "Seeing so few are saved in this blessed Ark wherein I am, in comparison of the multitudes that perish in the deluge, whence is this? why was I chosen, and so many about me left? why, but because it pleased him?" But all is strait here. We have neither hearts nor time for ample thoughts of this love, till we be beyond time; then shall we admire and praise without ceasing, and without wearying.

As the example the apostle here makes use of, is great and remarkable, so, *Thirdly*, it is fit and suitable for the instruction of Christians to whom he proceeds to adapt and apply it, in the particular resemblance of it to the rule of Christianity. *The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us.*

In these words we have, I. The End of Baptism. II. The proper virtue or efficacy of it for that End. And, III. A resemblanc in both these to Noah's preservation in the Flood.

I. The end of baptism, *to save us.* This is the great common end of all the ordinances of God; that one high mark they all aim at. And the great and common mistake in regard to them is, that they are not so understood

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and used. We come and sit awhile, and, if we can keep awake, give the word the hearing; but how few of us receive it as *the ingrafted word that is able to save our souls!* Were it thus taken, what sweetness would be found in it, which most who hear and read it are strangers to! How precious would those lines be, if we looked on them thus and saw them meeting and concentring in salvation as their end! Thus, likewise, were the sacraments considered indeed as seals of this inheritance, annexed to the great charter of it, seals of salvation, this would powerfully beget a fit appetite for the Lord's Supper, when we are invited to it, and would beget a due esteem of baptism; would teach you more frequent and fruitful thoughts of your own baptism, and more pious considerations of it when you require it for your children. A natural eye looks upon bread, and wine, and water, and sees the outward difference of their use there, that they are set apart and differenced (as is evident by external circumstances) from their common use; but the main of the difference, wherein their excellency lies, it sees not, as the eye of faith above that espies salvation under them. And oh! what a different thing are they to it, from what they are to a formal user of them! We should aspire to know the hidden rich things of God, that are wrapped up in his ordinances. We stick in the shell and surface of them, and seek no further; that makes them unbeautiful and unsavory to us, and that use of them turns into an empty custom. Let us be more earnest with him who hath appointed them, and made this their end, *to save us*, that he would clear up the eye of our souls, to see them thus under this relation, and to see how they are suited to this their end, and tend to it. And let us seriously seek salvation in them, from his own hand, and we shall find it.

*Doth save us.*] So that this salvation of Noah and his family from the deluge, and all outward deliverances and salvations, are but dark shadows of this. Let them not be spoken of, these reprisals and prolongings of this present life, in comparison of the deliverance of the soul from death, the second death; the stretching of a moment, compared to the concernment of eternity. How would any of you welcome a full and sure protection from common dangers, if such were to be had, that you should be ascertained of safety from sword and pestilence; that whatever others suffered about you, you and your family should be free! And those who have escaped a near danger of this kind are apt to rest there, as if no more were to be feared; whereas this common favor may be shown to those who are afar off from God. And what though you be not only thus far safe, but I say, if you were secured for the future (which none of you absolutely are), yet, when you are put out of danger of sword and plague, still death remains, and sin and wrath may be remaining with it. And shall it not be all one, to die under these in a time of public peace and welfare, as if it were now? Yea, it may be something more unhappy, by reason of the increase of the heap of sin and wrath, guiltiness being augmented by life prolonged; and more grievous to be pulled away from the world in the midst of peaceable enjoyment, and to have everlasting darkness succeed to that short sunshine of thy day of ease; happiness of a short date, and misery for ever! What availed it wicked Ham to outlive the flood, to inherit a curse after it: to be kept undrowned in the waters, to see himself and his posterity blasted with his father's curse? Think seriously, what will be the end of all thy temporary safety and preservation, if thou share not in this salvation, and find not thyself sealed and marked for it? What will it avail, to flatter thyself with a dream of happiness, and *walk in the light* of a few *sparks*, that will soon die out, and *then lie down in sorrow?* Isai. l. 11. A sad bed that, which the most have to go to, after they have wearied themselves all the day, all their life, in a chase of vanity!

II. The next thing is, the power and virtue of this means for its end. That baptism hath a power, is clear, in that it is so expressly said, *it doth save us:* what kind of power is equally clear from the way it is here expressed: not by a natural force of the element: though adapted and sacramentally used, it can only wash away the filth of the body; its physical efficacy or power reaches no further: but it is in the hand of the Spirit of God, as other sacraments are, and as the word itself is, to purify the conscience, and convey grace and salvation to the soul, by the reference it hath to, and union with, that which it represents. It saves *by the answer of a good conscience unto God*, and it affords that, *by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.*

Thus, then, we have a true account of the power of this, and so of other sacraments, and a discovery of the error of two extremes: (1.) Of those who ascribe too much to them, as if they wrought by a natural inherent virtue, and carried grace in them inseparably. (2.) Of those who ascribe too little to them, making them only signs and badges of our profession. Signs they are, but more than signs merely representing; they are means exhibiting, and seals confirming, grace to the faithful. But the working of faith, and the conveying of Christ into the soul to be received by faith, is not a thing put into them to do of themselves, but still in the Supreme Hand that appointed them; and he indeed both causes the souls of his own to receive these his seals with faith, and makes them effectual to confirm that faith which receives them so. They are then, in a word, neither empty signs to them who believe, nor effectual causes of grace to them who believe not.

The mistake, on both sides, arises from the



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want of duly considering the relative nature of these seals, and that kind of union that is between them and the grace they represent, which is real, though not natural or physical, as they speak, so that, though they do not save all who partake of them, yet they do really and effectually save believers (for whose salvation they are means), as the other external ordinanees of God do. Though they have not that power which is peculiar to the Author of them, yet a power they have, such as befits their nature, and by reason of which they are truly said to sanctify and justify, and so to save, as the apostle here avers of baptism.

Now, that which is intended for our help, our carnal minds are ready to turn into a hinderance and disadvantage. The Lord representing invisible things to the eye, and confirming his promises even by visible seals, we are apt from the grossness of our unspiritual hearts, instead of stepping up by that which is earthly, to the Divine spiritual things represented, to stay in the outward element, and go no further. Therefore, the apostle, to lead us into the inside of this seal of baptism, is very clear in designating the effect and fruit of it: *Not* (says he) the *putting away the filth of the flesh* (and water, if you look no further, can do no more): there is an invisible impurity upon our nature, chiefly on our invisible part, our soul: this washing means the taking away of that, and where it reaches its true effect, it doth so purify the conscience, and makes it good, truly so, in the sight of God, who is the judge of it.

Consider, 1. It is a pitiful thing to see the ignorance of the most, professing Christianity, and partaking of the outward seals of it, yet not knowing what they mean: not apprehending the spiritual dignity and virtue of them. Blind in the *mysteries of the kingdom*, they are not so much as sensible of that blindness. And being ignorant of the nature of these holy things, they can not have a due esteem of them, which arises out of the view of their inward worth and efficacy. A confused fancy they have of some good in them, and this rising to the other extreme, to a superstitious confidence in the simple performance and participation of them, as if that carried some inseparable virtue with it, which none could miss of, who are sprinkled with the waters of baptism, and share in the elements of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper.

And what is the utmost plea of the most for their title to heaven, but that in these relative and external things they are Christians; that they are baptized, hear the word, and are admitted to the Lord's table?—Not considering how many have gone through all these, who yet daily are going on in the ways of death, never coming near Jesus Christ, *who is the way, and the truth, and the life*, whom the word, and the seals of it, hold forth to believers. And they are washed in his blood, and quickened with his life, and made like him, and co-heirs of glory with him.

2. Even those who have some clearer notion of the nature and fruit of the seals of grace, yet are in a practical error, in that they look not with due diligence into themselves, inquiring after the efficiency of them in their hearts; do not study the life of Christ, to know more what it is, and then, to search into themselves for the truth and the growth of that life within them. Is it not an unbecoming thing, for a Christian (when he is about to appear before the Lord at his table, and so looks something more narrowly within) to find as little faith, as little Divine affection, a heart as unmortified to the world, as cold toward Christ, as before his last address to the same table, after the intervening, possibly, of many months; in which time, had he been careful often to reflect inward on his heart, and to look back upon that new sealing in his last participation, he might probably have been more conformable? And, truly, as there is much guiltiness cleaves to us in this, so, generally, much more in reference to this other sacrament that is here the apostle's subject, *baptism*, which being but once administered, and that in infancy, is very seldom and slightly considered by many, even real Christians. And so we are at a loss in that profit and comfort, that increase of both holiness and faith, which the frequent recollecting of it, after a spiritual manner, would no doubt advance us to. And not only do we neglect to put ourselves upon the thoughts of it in private, but, in the frequent opportunities of such thoughts in public, we let it pass unregarded, are idle, inconsiderate, and so truly guilty beholders. And the more frequently we have these opportunities, the less are we touched with them; they become common, and work not, and the slighting of them grows as common with us as the thing. Yea, when the engagement is more special and personal, when parents are to present their infants to this ordinance (and then might, and certainly ought to have a more particular and fixed eye upon it, and themselves as being sealed with it, to ask within after the fruit and power of it, and to stir up themselves anew to the actings of faith, and to ambition after newness of life, and, with earnest prayer for their children, to be suiters for themselves, for further evidence of their interest in Christ); yet possibly many are not much engaged in these things even at such times, but are more busied to prepare their house for entertaining their friends, than to prepare their hearts for offering up their infant unto God to be sealed, and withal to make a new offer of their own hearts to him, to have renewed on them the inward seal of the covenant of grace, the outward seal whereof they did receive, as it is now to be conferred upon their infant.

Did we often look upon the face of our souls, the beholding of the many spots with which we have defiled them after our washing, might work us to shame and grief, and

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would drive us by renewed application to wash often in that blood which that water figures, which alone can fetch out the stain of sin; and then, it would put us upon renewed purposes of purity, to walk more carefully, to avoid the pollutions of the world we walk in, and to purge out the pollutions of the hearts that we carry about with us, which defile us more than all the world besides. It would work a holy disdain of sin, often to contemplate ourselves as washed in so precious a laver. Shall I, would the Christian say, considering that I am now cleansed in the precious blood of my Lord Jesus, run again into that puddle out of which he so graciously took me, and made me clean? Let the swine wallow in it: he hath made me of his sheep-fold. He hath made me of that excellent order for which all are consecrated by that washing, who partake of it: *he hath washed us in his blood, and made us kings and priests unto God the Father.* Am I of these, and shall I debase myself to the vile pleasures of sin? No, I will think myself too good to serve any sinful lusts: seeing that he hath looked on me, and taken me up, and washed and dignified me, and that I am wholly his, all my study and business shall be, to honor and magnify him.

*The answer of a good conscience*, &c.] The taking away of spiritual filthiness, as the true and saving effect of baptism, the apostle here expresses by that which is the further result and effect of it, *the answer of a good conscience unto God;* for it is the washing away of that filthiness which both makes the conscience good, and in making it such, fits it to make answer unto God. A good conscience, in its full sense, is a pure conscience and a peaceable conscience; and it can not, indeed, be peaceably good, unless it be purely good. And although, on the other side, it may want the present enjoyment of peace, being purified, yet, certainly, in a purified conscience, there is a title and right to peace; it is radically there, even when it appears not; and, in due time, it shall appear, shall spring forth, bud, and flourish.

The purified and good condition of the whole soul may well, as here it doth, go under the name of the good conscience, it being so prime a faculty of it, and as the glass of the whole soul, wherein the estate of it is represented. Therefore, Heb. ix., the efficacy of the blood of Christ is expressed thus, that *it purifieth our consciences from dead works;* which expression is the same thing in effect with that here, *the answer of a good conscience unto God.*

*The answer* [ἐπερώτημα], the asking or questioning of conscience, which comprises likewise its answer; for the word intends the whole correspondence of the conscience with God, and with itself as toward God, or in the sight of God. And indeed, God's questioning it, is by itself; it is his deputy in the soul. He makes it pose itself for him, and before him, concerning its own condition, and so, the answer it gives itself in that posture, he as it were sitting and hearing it in his presence, is an answer made unto him. This questioning and answering (if such a thing were at this time, as it was certainly soon after), yet means not the questions and answers used in the baptism of persons who, being of years, professed their faith in answering the questions moved; it possibly alludes unto that; but it further, by way of resemblance, expresses the inward questioning and answering which is transacted within, betwixt the soul and itself, and the soul and God, and so is allusively called ἐπερώτημα, a questioning and answering, but it is distinctively specified, εἰς Θεόν: whereas the other was toward men, this is unto God.

A good conscience is a waking, speaking conscience, and the conscience that questions itself most, is of all sorts the best; that which is dumb, therefore, or asleep, and is not active and frequent in self-inquiries, is not a good conscience. The word is judicial, ἐπερώτημα, alluding to the *interrogation* used in law for the trial and executing of processes. And this is the great business of conscience, to sit, and examine, and judge within; to *hold courts* in the soul. And it is of continual necessity that it be so: there can be no *vacation* of this judicature, without great damage to the estate of the soul; yea, not a day ought to pass without a session of conscience within; for daily disorders arise in the soul, which, if they pass on, will grow and gather more, and so breed more difficulty in their trial and redress. Yet men do easily turn from this work as hard and unpleasant, and make many a long vacation in the year, and protract it from one day to another. In the morning they must go about their business, and at night, they are weary and sleepy, and all the day long one affair steps in after another; and in case of that failing, some trifling company or other; and so their days pass on, while the soul is overgrown with impunities and disorders.

You know what confusions, and disorders, and evils, will abound among a rude people, where there is no kind of court or judicature held. Thus is it with that unruly rabble, the lusts and passions of our souls, when there is no discipline or judgment within, or where there is but a neglect and intermission of it for a short time. And the most part of souls are in the posture of ruin: their vile affections, as a headstrong, tumultuous multitude, that will not suffer a deputed judge to sit among them, cry down their consciences, and make a continual noise, that the voice of it may not be heard, and so, force it to desist and leave them to their own ways.

But you who take this course, know, you are providing the severest judgment for yourselves by this disturbing of judgment, as when a people rise against an inferior judge, the prince or supreme magistrate who sent

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him, hearing of it, doth not fail to vindicate his honor and justice in their exemplary punishment.

Will you not answer unto conscience, but, when it begins to speak, turn to business or company, that you may not hear it? Know, that it and you must answer unto God; and when he shall make inquiry, it must report, and report as the truth is, knowing that there is no hiding the matter from him; Lord, there are, to my knowledge, a world of enormities within the circuit I had to judge, and I would have judged them, but was forcibly withstood and interrupted; and was not strong enough to resist the tumultuous power that rose against me; now the matter comes into thine own hand to judge it thyself. What shall the soul say in that day, when conscience shall make such an answer unto God, and it shall come under the severity of his justice for all? Whereas, if it had given way to the conscience to find out, and judge, and rectify matters, so that it could have answered concerning its procedure that way, God would accept this as the answer of a good conscience, and what conscience had done, he would not do over again: It hath judged; then, I acquit. *For if we would judge ourselves* (says the apostle), *we should not be judged.* 1 Cor. xi. 31.

The questioning or inquiry of conscience, and so, its report or answer unto God, extends to all the affairs of the soul, all the affections and motions of it, and all the actions and carriage of the whole man. The open wickedness of the most, testifies against them, that though sprinkled with water in baptism, yet they are strangers to the power and gracious efficacy of it. Not being *baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire*, they have still their dross and filth remaining in them, and nothing else appearing in their ways; so that their consciences can not so much as make a good answer for them unto men, much less unto God. What shall it answer for them, being judged, but that they are swearers, and cursers, and drunkards, or unclean? or that they are slanderers, delighting to pass their hours in descanting on the actions and ways of others, and looking through the miscolored glass of their own malice and pride; that they are neglecters of God and holy things, lovers of themselves and their own pleasures, more than lovers of God? And have such as these impudence enough to call themselves Christians, and to pretend themselves to be such as are washed in the blood of Christ? Yes, they do this. But be ashamed and confounded in yourselves, you that remain in this condition. Yea, although thou art blameless in men's eyes, and possibly in thy own eyes too, yet thou mayest be *filthy* still in the sight of God. There is such *a generation*, a multitude of them, *that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness* (Prov. xxx. 12); moral evil persons who are most satisfied with their own estate, or such as have further *a form of godliness*, but their lusts are not mortified by *the power of it*, secret pride, and earthliness of mind, and vain glory, and carnal wisdom, being still entertained with pleasure within.

These are foul pollutions, filthy and hateful in the sight of God; so that there it is thus, that such guests are in peaceable possession of the heart, there the blood and Spirit of Christ are not yet come; neither can there be this answer of a good conscience unto God.

This *answer of a good conscience unto God*, as likewise its questioning, to enable itself for that answer, is touching two great points, which are of chief concern to the soul, its *justification*, and its *sanctification*; for baptism is the seal of both, and purifies the conscience in both respects. *That* water is the figure both of the blood and the water, the justifying blood of Christ, and the pure water of the sanctifying Spirit of Christ: He takes away the condemning guiltiness of sin, by the one, and the polluting filthiness, by the other.

Now, the conscience of a real believer inquiring within, upon right discovery will make this answer unto God: Lord, I have found that there is no standing before thee, for the soul in itself is overwhelmed with a world of guiltiness: but I find a blood sprinkled upon it, that hath, I am sure, virtue enough to purge it all away, and to present it pure unto thee; and I know that wheresoever thou findest that blood sprinkled, thine anger is quenched and appeased immediately upon the sight of it. Thine hand can not smite where that blood is before thine eye.—And this the Lord does agree to, and authorizes the conscience, upon this account, to return back an answer of safety and peace to the soul.

So for the other point: Lord, I find a living work of holiness on this soul: though there is yet corruption there, yet it is as a continual grief and vexation, it is an implacable hatred, there is no peace between them, but continual enmity and hostility; and if I can not say much of the high degrees of grace, and faith in Christ, and love to him, and heavenliness of mind, yet, I may say, there is a beginning of these: at least, this I most confidently affirm, that there are real and earnest desires of the soul after these things. It would know and conform to thy will, and be delivered from itself and its own will; and though it were to the highest displeasure of all the world, it would gladly walk in all well-pleasing unto thee. Now, he who sees the truth of these things, knowing it to be thus, owns it as his own work, and engages himself to advance it, and bring it to perfection. This is a taste of that intercourse which the purified conscience hath with God, as the saving fruit of baptism.

And all this it doth, not of itself, but by virtue of *the resurrection of Jesus Christ*, which refers both to the remote effect, *salvation*, and to the nearer effect, as a means

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and pledge of that, *the purifying of the conscience.*

By this his death, and the effusion of his blood in his sufferings, are not excluded, but are included in it, his resurrection being the evidence of that whole work of expiation, both completed and accepted: full payment being made by our surety, and so, he set free, his freedom is the cause and the assurance of ours. Therefore the Apostle St. Paul expresses it so, that *He died for our sins, and rose for our righteousness;* and our apostle shows us the worth of our *living hope* in this same resurrection, chap. i. ver. 3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*

Now, that baptism doth apply and seal to the believer his interest in the death and resurrection of Christ, the Apostle St. Paul teaches to the full, Rom. vi. 4: *We are buried with him,* says he, *by baptism into his death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should also walk in newness of life.* The dipping into the waters representing our dying with Christ; and the return thence, our rising with him.

The last thing is, the resemblance of baptism, in these things, to the saving of Noah in the flood. And it holds in that we spoke of last; for he seemed to have rather entered into a grave, as dead, than into a safeguard of life, in going into the ark; yet, being buried there, he rose again, as it were, in his coming forth to begin a new world. The waters of the flood drowned the ungodly, as a heap of filthiness washed them away, them and their sin together as one, being inseparable; and upon the same waters, the ark floating, preserved Noah. Thus, the waters of baptism are intended as a deluge to drown sin and to save the believer, who by faith is separated both from the world and from his sin; so, it sinks, and he is saved.

And there is, further, another thing specified by the apostle, wherein, though it be a little hard, yet he chiefly intends the parallel; the *fewness* of those that are saved by both. For though many are sprinkled with the elemental water of baptism, yet few, so as to attain by it the *answer of a good conscience toward God,* and to live by participation of the resurrection and life of Christ.

Thou that seest the world perishing in a deluge of wrath, and art now most thoughtful for this, how thou shalt escape it, fly into Christ as thy safety, and rest secure there. Thou shalt find life in his death, and that life further ascertained to thee in his rising again. So full and clear a title to life hast thou in these two, that thou canst challenge all adversaries upon this very ground, as unconquerable while thou standest on it, and mayest speak thy challenge in the apostle's style, *It is God that justifieth, who shall condemn?* But how know you that he justifies? *It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen, who sitteth at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.* Rom. viii. 33, 34. It alludes to that place, Isa. l. 8, where Christ speaks of himself, but in the name of all who adhere to him; *He is near that justifies me: who is he that will contend with me?* So that what Christ speaks there, the apostle, with good reason, imparts to each believer as in him. If no more is to be laid to Christ's charge, he being now acquitted, as is clear by his rising again; then, neither to thine, who art clothed with him, and one with him.

This is the grand answer of a good conscience; and, in point of justifying them before God, there can be no answer but this. What have any to say to thee? Thy debt is paid by him who undertook it; and he is free. Answer all accusations with this, *Christ is risen.*

And then, for the mortifying of sin, and strengthening of thy graces, look daily on that death and resurrection. Study them, set thine eye upon them, till thy heart take on the impression of them by much spiritual and affectionate looking on them. *Beholding the glory of thy Lord* Christ, then, be *transformed into it.* 2 Cor. iii. 18. It is not only a moral pattern or copy, but an effectual cause of thy sanctification, having real influence into thy soul. Dead with him, and again alive with him! Oh happiness and dignity unspeakable, to have this life known and cleared to your souls! If it were, how would it make you live above the world, and all the vain hopes and fears of this wretched life, and the fear of death itself! Yea, it would make that visage of death most lovely, which to the world is most affrightful.

It is the apostle's maxim, that the *carnal mind is enmity against God;* and as it is universally true of every carnal mind, so of all the motions and thoughts of it. Even where it seems to agree with God, yet it is still contrary; if it acknowledge and conform to his ordinance, yet, even in so doing, it is on directly opposite terms to him, particularly in this, that what he esteems most in them, the carnal mind makes least account of. He chiefly eyes and values the inside: the natural man dwells and rests in the shell and surface of them. God, according to his spiritual nature, looks most on the more spiritual part of his worship and worshippers; the carnal mind is in this, just like itself, altogether for the sensible, external part, and unable to look beyond it. Therefore the apostle here, having taken occasion to speak of baptism in terms that contain a parallel and resemblance between it and the flood, is express in correcting this mistake. It is not, says he, *the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience.*

Were it possible to persuade you, I would recommend one thing to you: learn to look on the ordinances of God suitably to their

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nature, spiritually, and inquire after the spiritual effect and working of them upon your consciences. We would willingly have all religion reduced to externals; this is our natural choice; and we would pay all in this coin, as cheaper and easier by far, and would compound for the spiritual part, rather to add and give more external performance and ceremony. Hence, the natural complacency in popery, which is all for this service of the flesh and body-services; and to those prescribed by God, will deal so liberally with him in that kind, as to add more, and frame new devices and rites, what you will in this kind, sprinklings, and washings, and anointings, and incense. But whither tends all this? Is it not a gross mistaking of God, to think him thus pleased? Or is it not a direct affront, knowing that he is not pleased with these, but desires another thing, to thrust that upon him which he cares not for, and refuse him what he calls for?—that single, humble heart-worship and walking with him, that purity of spirit and conscience which only he prizes; no outward service being acceptable, but for these, as they tend to this end and do attain it. Give me, saith he, nothing, if you give not this. Oh! saith the carnal mind, anything but this thou shalt have; as many washings and offerings as thou wilt, *thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil;* yea, rather than fail, *let the fruit of my body go for the sin of my soul.* Mic. vi. 6. Thus we: will the outward use of the word and sacraments do it? then, all shall be well. Baptized we are; and shall I hear much and communicate often, if I can reach it? Shall I be exact in point of family-worship? Shall I pray in secret? All this I do, or at least I now promise. Ay, but when all that is done, there is yet one thing may be wanting, and if it be so, all that amounts to nothing. Is thy conscience purified, and made good by all these; or art thou seeking and aiming at this, by the use of all means? Then certainly thou shalt find life in them. But does thy heart still remain uncleansed from the old ways, not purified from the pollutions of the world? Do thy beloved sins still lodge with thee, and keep possession of thy heart? Then art thou still a stranger to Christ, and an enemy to God. The word and seals of life are dead to thee, and thou art still dead in the use of them all. Know you not that many have made shipwreck upon the very rock of salvation? that many who were baptized as well as you, and as constant attendants on all the worship and ordinances of God as you, yet have remained without Christ, and died in their sins, and are now past recovery? Oh that you would be warned! There are still multitudes running headlong that same course, tending to destruction, through the midst of all the means of salvation; the saddest way of all to it, through word and sacraments, and all heavenly ordinances, to be walking hellward! Christians, and yet no Christians; baptized, and yet unbaptized! As the prophet takes in the profane multitude of God's own people with the nations, Jer. ix. 26, *Egypt, and Judah, and Edom; all these nations are uncircumcised:* and the worst came last; *and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart:* thus, the most of us are unbaptized in the heart. And as this is the way of personal destruction, so it is that, as the prophet there declares, which brings upon the church so many public judgments; and as the apostle tells the Corinthians (1 Ep. xi. 30), that for the abuse of the Lord's Table, *many were sick, and many slept.* Certainly, our abuse of the holy things of God, and want of their proper spiritual fruits, are among the prime sins of this land, for which so many slain have fallen in the fields by the sword, and in the streets by pestilence; and more are likely yet to fall, if we thus continue to provoke the Lord to his face. For, it is the most avowed direct affront, to profane his holy things; and this we do while we answer not their proper end, and are not inwardly sanctified by them. We have no other word, nor other sacraments, to recommend to you, than those which you have used so long to no purpose; only we would call you from the dead forms, to seek the living power of them, that you perish not.

You think the *renouncing of baptism* a horrible word, and that we would speak so only of witches; yet it is a common guiltiness that cleaves to all who renounce not the filthy lusts and the self-will of their own hearts. For baptism carries in it a renouncing of these: and so, the cleaving unto these, is a renouncing of it. Oh! we all were sealed for God in baptism; but who lives as if it was so? How few have the impression of it on the conscience, and the expression of it in the walk and fruit of their life! We do not, as clean-washed persons, abhor and fly all pollutions, *All fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.*

We have been a long time hearers of the gospel, whereof baptism is the seal, and most of us often at the Lord's Table. What hath all this done upon us? Ask within: Are your hearts changed? Is there a new creation there? Where is that spiritual-mindedness? Are your hearts dead to the world and sin, and alive to God, *your consciences purged from dead works?*

What means you? Is not this the end of all the ordinances, to make all clean, and to renew and make good the conscience, to bring the soul and your Lord into a happy amity, and a good correspondence, that it may not only be on speaking terms, but often speak and converse with him?—may have liberty both to demand and answer, as the original word implies? that it may speak the language of faith and humble obedience unto God, and that he may speak the language of peace to it, and both, the language of the Lord each to the other?

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That conscience alone is good, which is much busied in this work, in demanding and answering; which speaks much with itself, and much with God. This is both the sign that it is good, and the means to make it better. That soul will doubtless be very wary in its walk, which takes daily account of itself, and renders up that account unto God. It will not live by guess, but naturally examine each step beforehand, because it is resolved to examine all after; will consider well what it should do, because it means to ask over again what it hath done, and not only to answer itself, but to make a faithful report of all unto God; to lay all before him, continually upon trial made: to tell him what is in any measure well done, as his own work, and bless him for that; and tell him, too, all the slips and miscarriages of the day, as our own; complaining of ourselves in his presence, and still entreating free pardon, and more wisdom to walk more holily and exactly, and gaining, even by our failings, more humility and more watchfulness.

If you would have your own consciences answer well, they must inquire and question much beforehand. Whether is this I purpose and go about, agreeable to my Lord's will? Will it please him? Ask that more, and regard that more, than this, which the most follow. Will it please or profit myself? Fits that my own humor? And examine not only the bulk and substance of thy ways and actions, but the manner of them, how thy heart is set. So think it not enough to go to church or to pray, but *take heed how ye hear;* consider how pure he is, and how piercing his eye, whom thou servest.

Then, again, afterward; think it not enough, I was praying, or hearing, or reading, it was a good work, what need I question it further? No, but be still reflecting and asking how it was done: How have I heard, how have I prayed? Was my heart humbled by the discoveries of sin, from the word? Was it refreshed with the promises of grace? Did it lie level under the word, to receive the stamp of it? Was it in prayer set and kept in a holy bent toward God? Did it breathe forth real and earnest desires into his ear; or was it remiss, and roving, and dead in the service? So in my society with others, in such and such company, what was spent of my time, and how did I employ it? Did I seek to honor my Lord, and to edify my brethren, by my carriage and speeches; or did the time run out in trifling vain discourse? When alone, was it the carriage and walk of my heart? Where it hath most liberty to move in its own pace, is it delighted in converse with God? Are the thoughts of heavenly things frequent and sweet to it; or does it run after the earth and the delights of it, spinning out itself in impertinent vain contrivances?

The neglect of such inquiries, is that which entertains and increases the impurity of the soul, so that men are afraid to look into themselves, and to look up to God. But Oh! what a foolish course is this, to shift off what can not be avoided! In the end, answer must be made to that all-seeing Judge with whom we have to do, and to whom we owe our accounts.

And, truly, it should be seriously considered, what makes this good conscience, which makes an acceptable answer unto God. That appears by the opposition, *not the putting away the filth of the flesh*, then, it *is* the putting away of *soul-filthiness;* so it is the renewing and purifying of the conscience, that makes it good, pure, and peaceable. In the purifying, it may be troubled, which is but the stirring in cleansing of it, and makes more quiet in the end, and physic, or the lancing of a sore; and after it is in some measure cleansed, it may have fits of trouble, which yet still add further purity and further peace. So there is no hazard in that work; but all the misery is, a dead security of the conscience while remaining filthy, and yet unstirred; or, after some stirring or pricking, as a wound not thoroughly cured, skinned over, which will but breed more vexation in the end; it will fester and grow more difficult to be cured, and if it be cured, it must be by deeper cutting and more pain, than if at first it had endured a thorough search.

O, my brethren! take heed of sleeping unto death in carnal ease. Resolve to take no rest till you be in the element and place of soul-rest, where solid rest indeed is. Rest not till you be with Christ. Though all the world should offer their best, turn them by with disdain; if they will not be turned by, throw them down, and go over them, and trample upon them. Say you have no rest to give me, nor will I take any at your hands, nor from any creature. There is no rest for me till I be under his shadow, who endured so much trouble to purchase my rest, and whom having found, I may sit down quiet and satisfied; and when the men of the world make boast of the highest content, I will outvie them all with this one word, *my beloved is mine, and I am his.*

*The answer of a good conscience toward God.*] The conscience of man is never rightly at peace in itself, till it be rightly persuaded of peace with God, which, while it remains filthy, it can not be; for he is holy, and iniquity can not dwell with *him.* What *communion betwixt light and darkness?* 2 Cor. vi. 14. So then the conscience must be cleansed, ere it can look upon God with assurance and peace. This cleansing is sacramentally performed by baptism; effectually, by the Spirit of Christ and the blood of Christ; and he lives to impart both; therefore here is mentioned his resurrection from the dead, as that, by virtue whereof we are assured of this purifying and peace. Then can the conscience, in some measure with

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confidence, answer, Lord, though polluted by former sins, and by sin still dwelling in me, yet thou seest that my desires are to be daily more like my Savior; I would have more love and zeal for thee, more hatred of sin. It can answer with St. Peter, when he was posed, *Lovest thou me?* Lord, I appeal to thine own eye, who seest my heart; *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee;* at least I desire to love thee, and to desire thee; and that is love. Willingly would I do thee more suitable service, and honor thy name more; and I do sincerely desire more grace for this, that thou mayest have more glory; and I entreat the light of thy countenance for this end, that, by seeing it, my heart may be more weaned from the world, and knit unto thyself. Thus it answers touching its inward frame, and the work of holiness by the Spirit of holiness dwelling in it. But, to answer justice, touching the point of guilt, it flies *to the blood of sprinkling*, fetches all its answer thence, turns over the matter upon it, and that blood answers for it; for it doth speak, and *speak better things than the blood of Abel*, Heb. xii. 24; speaks full payment of all that can be exacted from the sinner; and that is a sufficient answer.

The conscience is then, in this point, at first made speechless, driven to a nonplus in itself, hath from itself no answer to make; but then it turns about to Christ, and finds what to say: Lord, there is indeed in me nothing but guiltiness: I have deserved death; but I have fled into the city of refuge which thou hast appointed; there I resolve to abide, to live and die there. If justice pursue me, it shall find me there: I take sanctuary in Jesus. The arrest laid upon me, will light upon him, and he hath wherewithal to answer it. He can straightway declare he hath paid all, and can make it good. He hath the acquaintance to show; yea, his own liberty is a real sign of it. He was in prison, and is let free, which tells that all is satisfied. Therefore the answer here rises out of the *resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

And in this very thing lies our peace, and our way, and all our happiness. Oh! it is worth your time and pains, to try your interest in this; it is the only thing worthy your highest diligence. But the most are out of their wits, running like a number of distracted persons, and still in a deal of business, but to what end they know not. You are unwilling to be deceived in those things which, at their best and surest, do but deceive you when all is done; but are content to be deceived in that which is your great concernment. You are your own deceivers in it; gladly gulled with shadows of faith and repentance, false touches of sorrow, and false flashes of joy, and are not careful to have your souls really unbottomed from themselves, and built upon Christ; to have him your treasure, your righteousness, your all, and to have him your answer unto God your Father. But if you will yet be advised, let go all, to lay hold on him: lay your souls on him, and leave him not. He is *a tried foundation-stone*, and *he that trusts on him, shall not be confounded.*

VER. 22. Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him.

THIS is added on purpose to show us further, what he is, how high and glorious a Savior we have!

We have here four points or steps of the exaltation of Christ:—1. Resurrection from the dead. 2. Ascension into heaven. 3. Sitting at the right hand of God. 4. In that posture, his royal authority over the angels. The particulars are clear in themselves. Of the sitting at the right hand of God, you are not ignorant that it is a borrowed expression, drawn from earth to heaven, to bring down some notion of heaven to us; to signify to us in our language, suitably to our customs, the supreme dignity of Jesus Christ, God and Man, the Mediator of the new covenant, his matchless nearness unto his Father, and the sovereignty given him over heaven and earth. And that of the subjection of angels, is but a more particular specifying of that his dignity and power, as enthroned at the Father's right hand, they being the most elevated and glorious creatures: so that his authority over all the world is implied in that subjection of the highest and noblest part of it. His victory and triumph over the angels of darkness, is an evidence of his invincible power and greatness, and matter of comfort to his saints; but this here intends his supremacy over the glorious elect angels.

That there is among them priority, we find; that there is a comely order in their differences, can not be doubted; but to marshal their degrees and stations above, is a point, not only of vain fruitless curiosity, but of presumptuous intrusion. Whether these are names of their different particular dignities, or only different names of their general excellency and power, as I think it can not be certainly well determined, so it imports us not to determine: only, this we know, and are particularly taught from this place, that whatsoever is their common dignity, both in names and differences, they are all subject to our glorious Head, Christ.

What confirmation they have in their estate by him (though piously asserted by divines), is not so infallibly clear from the alleged scriptures, which may bear another sense. But this is certain, that he is their king, and they acknowledge him to be so, and do incessantly admire and adore him. They rejoice in his glory, and in the glory and happiness of mankind through him. They yield him most cheerful obedience, and serve him readily in the good of his church, and of each particular believer, as he deputes and employs them.

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This is the thing here intended, having in it these two: his dignity above them, and his authority over them.

1. Such is his dignity, that even that nature which he stooped below them to take on, he hath carried up and raised above them; the very earth, the flesh of man, being exalted in his person above all those heavenly spirits, who are of so excellent and pure a being in their nature, and from the beginning of the world, have been clothed with so transcendent glory. A parcel of clay is made so bright, and set so high, as to outshine those bright flaming spirits, those Stars of the morning, that flesh being united to the Fountain of Light, the blessed Deity in the person of the Son.

In coming to fetch and put on this garment, he made himself *lower than the angels*; but carrying it with him, at his return to his eternal throne, and sitting down with it there, it is raised high above them; as the apostle teaches excellently and amply: *To which of them said he, Sit on my right hand?* Heb. i. 2.

This they look upon with perpetual wonder, but not with envy or repining. No, among all their eyes, no such eye is to be found. Yea, they rejoice in the infinite wisdom of God in this design, and his infinite love to poor lost mankind. It is wonderful, indeed, to see him filling the room of their fallen brethren with new guests from earth, yea, with such as are born heirs of hell; but that not only sinful men should thus be raised to a participation of glory with them who are spotless, sinless spirits, but their flesh, in their Redeemer, should be dignified with a glory so far beyond them—this is that mystery the angels are intent on looking and prying into, and can not, nor ever shall, see the bottom of it, for it hath none.

2. Jesus Christ is not only exalted above the angels in absolute dignity, but in relative authority over them. He is made captain over those heavenly bands: they are all under his command, for all services wherein it pleases him to employ them! and the great employment he hath, is the attending on his church, and on particular elect ones. *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation?* Heb. i. *ult.* They are the servants of Christ, and in him, and at his appointment, the servants of every believer; and are many ways serviceable and useful for their good, which truly we do not duly consider. There is no danger of overvaluing them, and inclining to worship them upon this consideration; yea, if we take it right, it will rather take us off from that. The angel judged his argument strong enough to St. John against that, that he was but *his fellow-servant*, Rev. xix. 10. But this is more, that they are servants to us, although not therefore inferior, it being an honorary service. Yet certainly they are inferior to our Head, and so, to his mystical body, taken in that notion, as a part of him.

*Reflection* 1. The height of this our Savior's glory will appear the more, if we reflect on the descent from which he ascended to it. Oh! how low did we bring down so high a majesty, into the pit wherein we had fallen, by climbing to be higher than he had set us! It was high indeed, as we were fallen so low, and yet he, against whom our sin was committed, came down to help us up again, and to take hold of us—*took us on;* so the word is [ἐπιλαμβάνεται]. Hebrews ii. 16: *He took not hold of the angels*—let them go, hath left them to die for ever—*but he took hold of the seed of Abraham*, and took on him indeed their flesh, dwelling among us, and in a mean part. He *emptied himself*, ἐκένωσεν (Phil. ii. 7), and became of no repute. And further, after he descended to the earth, and into our flesh, in it he became *obedient to death* upon the cross, and descended into the grave. And by these steps, he was walking toward that glory wherein he now is: *He abased himself, wherefore*, says the apostle, *God hath highly exalted him.* Phil. ii. 8. So he says of himself, *Ought not Christ first to suffer these things, and so enter into his glory?* Luke xxiv. 26. Now this, indeed, it is pertinent to consider. The apostle is here upon the point of Christ's sufferings; that is his theme, and therefore he is so particular in the ascending of Christ to his glory. Who, of those that would come thither, will refuse to follow him in the way wherein he led, he, [ἀρχηγὸς] *the leader of our faith?* Hebrews xii. 2. And who, of those who follow him, will not love and delight to follow him through any way, the lowest and darkest? It is excellent and safe, and then, it ends you see where.

*Refl.* 2. Think not strange of the Lord's method with his church, in bringing her to so low and desperate a posture many times. Can she be in a condition more seemingly desperate than was her Head—not only in ignominious sufferings, but dead and laid in the grave, and the stone rolled to it and sealed, and all made sure? And yet he arose and ascended, and now sits in glory, and shall sit *till all his enemies become his footstool.* Do not fear for him, that they shall overtop, yea, or be able to reach him who is exalted higher than the heavens: neither be afraid for his church, which is his body, and, if her Head be safe and alive, can not but partake of safety and life with him. Though she were, to sight, dead and laid in the grave, yet shall she arise thence, and be more glorious than before (Isaiah xxvi. 19); and still, the deeper her distress, shall rise the higher in the day of deliverance.

Thus, in his dealing with a soul, observe the Lord's method. Think it not strange that he brings a soul low, very low, which he means to comfort and exalt very high in grace and glory; that he leads it by hell-gates to



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heaven; that it be at that point, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Was not the Head put to use that word, and so to speak it, as the head speaks for the body, seasoning it for his members, and sweetening that bitter cup by his own drinking of it? Oh! what a hard condition may a soul be brought unto, and put to think, *Can he love me, and intend mercy for me, who leaves me to this?* And yet, in all, the Lord is preparing it thus for comfort and blessedness.

*Refl.* 3. Turn your thoughts more frequently to this excellent subject, the glorious high estate of our *great High Priest*. The angels admire this mystery, and we slight it! They rejoice in it, and we, whom it certainly more nearly concerns, are not moved with it; we do not draw that comfort and instruction from it, which it would plentifully afford, if it were sought after. It would comfort us against all troubles and fears to reflect, "Is he not on high, who hath undertaken for us? Doth anything befall us, but it is past first in heaven? And shall anything pass there to your prejudice or damage? He sits there, and is upon the counsel of all, who hath loved us, and given himself for us; yea, who, as he descended thence for us, did likewise ascend thither again for us. He hath made our inheritance which he purchased, there sure to us, taking possession for us, and in our name, since he is there, not only as the Son of God, but as our surety, and as our Head." And so the believer may think himself even already possessed of this right, inasmuch as his Christ is there. The saints are glorified already in their Head. *Ubi caput meum regnat ibi me regnare credo: Where he reigns, there I believe myself to reign*, says Augustine. And consider, in all thy straits and troubles, outward or inward, they are not hid from him. He knows them, and feels them, thy compassionate High Priest hath a gracious sense of thy frailties and griefs, fears, and temptations, and will not suffer thee to be surcharged. He is still presenting thy estate to the Father, and using that interest and power which he hath in his affection, for thy good. And what wouldst thou more? Art thou one whose heart desires to rest upon him, and cleave to him? Thou art knit so to him, that his resurrection and glory secure thee thine. His life and thine are not two, but one life, as that of the head and members; and if he could not be overcome of death, thou canst not neither. Oh! that sweet word, *Because I live, ye shall live also.* John xiv. 19.

Let thy thoughts and carriage be moulded in this contemplation rightly, ever to look on thy exalted Head. Consider his glory; see not only thy nature raised in him above the angels, but thy person interested by faith in that his glory; and then, think thyself too good to serve any base lust. Look down on sin and the world with a holy disdain, being united to him who is so exalted and so glorious. And let not thy mind creep here; engage not thy heart to anything that time and this earth can afford. Oh! why are we so little where there is such a spring of delightful and high thoughts for us? *If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where he sits.* Col. iii. 1. What mean you? Are ye such as will let go your interest in this once crucified, and now glorified Jesus? If not, why are ye not more conformable to it? Why does it not possess your hearts more? Ought it not to be thus? Should not our hearts be where our treasure, where our blessed Head is? Oh! how unreasonable, how unfriendly is it, how much may we be ashamed to have room in our hearts for earnest thoughts, or desires, or delights, about anything beside him?

Were this deeply wrought upon the hearts of those that have a right in it, would there be found in them any attachment to the poor things that are passing away? Would death be a terrible word? Yea, would it not be one of the sweetest, most rejoicing thoughts to solace and ease the heart under all pressures, to look forward to that day of liberty? This infectious disease* may keep possession of all the winter, and grow hot with the year again. Do not flatter yourselves, and think it is past; you have yet remembering strokes to keep it in your eye. But, however, shall we abide always here? Or is there any reason when things are duly weighed, why we should desire it? Well, if you would be united beforehand, and so feel your separation from this world less, this is the only way: Look up to him who draws up all hearts that do indeed behold him. Then, I say, thy heart shall be removed beforehand; and the rest is easy and sweet. When that is done, all is gained. And consider, how he desires the completion of our union with him. Shall it be his request and earnest desire, and shall it not be ours too, *that where he is, there we may be also?* John xvii. 24. Let us expect it with patient submission, yet striving by desires and suits, and looking out for our release from this body of sin and death.

## CHAPTER IV.

VER. 1. Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.

THE main of a Christian's duty lies in these two things, patience in suffering, and avoidance of sin, ἀντίχου καὶ ἀπίχου, and they have a natural influence upon each other. Although affliction simply doth not, yet affliction sweetly and humbly carried, doth purify and disengage the heart from sin, wean it from the world and the common ways of it. And

* This probably refers to the pestilence in 1665. See the lecture on chap. iv. 6. "Though the pestilence doth not affright you so," &c.

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again, holy and exact walking keeps the soul in a sound, healthful temper, and so enables it to patient suffering, to bear things more easily; as a strong body endures fatigue, heat, cold, and hardship, with ease, a small part whereof would surcharge a sickly constitution. The consciousness of sin, and careless unholy courses, do wonderfully weaken a soul and distemper it, so that it is not able to endure much; every little thing disturbs it. Therefore, the apostle hath reason, both to insist so much on these two points in this epistle, and likewise to interweave the one so often with the other, pressing jointly throughout, the cheerful bearing of all kinds of afflictions, and the careful forbearing all kinds of sin; and out of the one discourse he slides into the other; as here.

And as the things agree in their nature, so, in their great pattern and principle, Jesus Christ; and the apostle still draws both thence; that of patience, chap. iii. 18, that of holiness, here: *Forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us*, &c.

The chief study of a Christian, and the very thing that makes him to be a Christian, is, conformity with Christ. *Summa religionis imitari quem colis: This is the sum of religion* (said that wise heathen, Pythagoras), *to be like him whom thou worshippest.* But this example being in itself too sublime, is brought down to our view in Christ: the brightness of God is veiled, and veiled in our own flesh, that we may be able to look on it. The inaccessible light of the Deity is so attempered in the humanity of Christ, that we may read our lesson by it in him, and may direct our walk by it. And that truly is our only way; there is nothing but wandering and perishing in all other ways, nothing but darkness and misery out of him; but *He that follows me*, says he, *shall not walk in darkness.* John viii. 12. And therefore is he set before us in the gospel, in so clear and lively colors, that we may make this our whole endeavor, to be like him.

Consider here: 1. The high engagement to this conformity. 2. The nature of it. 3. The actual improvement of it.

1. The engagement lies in this, that he suffered for us. Of this we have treated before. Only, in reference to this, had he come down, as some have misimagined it, only to set us this perfect way of obedience, and give us an example of it in our own nature, this had been very much: that the Son of God should descend to teach wretched man, and the great King descend into man, and dwell in a tabernacle of clay, to set up a school in it, for such ignorant, accursed creatures, and should, in his own person, act the hardest lessons, both in doing and suffering, to lead us in both. But the matter goes yet higher than this. Oh! how much higher hath he suffered, not simply as our rule, but as our surety, and in our stead! *He suffered for us in the flesh.* We are the more obliged to make his suffering our example; because it was to us more than an example; it was our ransom.

This makes the conformity reasonable in a double aspect. [1.] It is *due*, that we follow him, who led thus as the *Captain of our salvation;* that we follow him in suffering, and in doing, seeing both were so for us. It is strange how some armies have addicted themselves to their head, so as to be at his call night and day, in summer and winter, to refuse no travail or endurance of hardship for him, and all only to please him, and serve his inclination and ambition; as Cæsar's trained bands, especially the veterans, it is a wonder what they endured in countermarches, and in traversing from one country to another. But besides that our Lord and Leader is so great and excellent, and so well deserves following for his own worth, this lays upon us an obligation beyond all conceiving, that he first suffered for us, that he endured such hatred of man, and such wrath of God the Father, and went through death, so vile a death, to procure our life. What can be too bitter to endure, or too sweet to forsake, to follow him? Were this duly considered, should we cleave to our lusts or to our ease? Should we not be willing to go through fire and water, yea, through death itself, yea, were it possible, through many deaths, to follow him.

[2.] Consider, as this conformity is *due*, so it is made *easy* by that his suffering for us. Our burden which pressed us to hell, being taken off, is not all that is left, to suffer or to do, as nothing. Our chains which bound us over to eternal death, being knocked off, shall we not walk, shall we not run, in his ways? Oh! think what that burden and yoke was which he hath eased us of, how heavy, how unsufferable it was, and then we shall think, what he so truly says, that all he lays on is sweet; *his yoke easy, and his burden light.* Oh! the happy change, to be rescued from the vilest slavery, and called to conformity and fellowship with the Son of God!

2. The nature of this conformity (to show the nearness of it), is expressed in the very same terms as in the Pattern: it is not a remote resemblance, but the same thing, even *suffering in the flesh.* But that we may understand rightly what suffering is here meant, it is plainly this *ceasing from sin.* So that *suffering in the flesh*, here, is not simply the enduring of afflictions, which is a part of the Christian's conformity to his head, Christ (Rom. viii. 29), but implies a more inward and spiritual suffering. It is the suffering and the dying of our corruption, the taking away of the life of sin by the death of Christ: that death of his sinless flesh works in the believer the death of sinful flesh, that is, the corruption of his nature, which is so usually in Scripture called *flesh.* Sin makes man base, drowns him in flesh and the lusts of it, makes the very soul become gross and earth-

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ly, turns it, as it were, to flesh. So, the apostle calls the very mind that is unrenewed, *a carnal mind*. Rom. viii. 7.

And what doth the mind of a natural man hunt after and run out into, from one day and year to another? Is it not on the things of this base world, and (*corporis negotium*) the concernment of his flesh? What would he have, but be accommodated to eat, and drink, and dress, and live at ease? *He minds earthly things*, savors and relishes them, and cares for them. Examine the most of your pains and time, and your strongest desires, and most serious thoughts, whether they go not this way, to raise yourselves and yours in your worldly condition. Yea, the highest projects of the greatest natural spirits, are but earth still, in respect of things truly spiritual. All their state designs go not beyond this poor life that perishes in the flesh, and is daily perishing even while we are busiest in upholding it and providing for it. Present things and this lodge of clay, this flesh and its interest, take up most of our time and pains: the most? yea, all, till that change be wrought which the apostle speaks of, till Christ be put on: Rom. xiii. 14. *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ*, and then, the other will easily follow, which follows in the words, *Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof*. Once in Christ, and then your necessary general care for this natural life will be regulated and moderated by the Spirit. And as for all unlawful and enormous desires of the flesh, you shall be rid of providing for these. Instead of all provision for the life of the flesh in that sense, there is another guest, and another life, for you now to wait on and furnish for. In them who are in Christ, that flesh is dead; they are freed from its drudgery. *He that hath suffered in the flesh, hath rested from sin.*

*Ceased from sin.*] He is at rest from it, a godly death, as they who *die in the Lord*, rest from their labors. Rev. xiv. 13. He that hath suffered in the flesh and is dead to it, dies indeed in the Lord, rests from the base turmoil of sin; it is no longer his master. As our sin was the cause of Christ's death, his death is the death of sin in us; and that, not simply as he bore a moral pattern of it, but as the real working cause of it, it hath an effectual influence on the soul, kills it to sin. *I am crucified with Christ*, says St. Paul. Gal. ii. 20. Faith so looks on the death of Christ, that it takes the impression of it, sets it on the heart, kills it unto sin. Christ and the believer do not only become one in law, so that his death stands for theirs, but one in nature, so that his death for sin causes theirs to it. They are *baptized into his death*. Rom. vi. 3.

This suffering in the flesh being unto death, and such a death (*crucifying*), hath indeed pain in it; but what then? It must be so like his, and the believer be like him, in willingly enduring it. All the pain of his suffering in the flesh, his love to us digested and went through with; so, all the pain to our nature in severing and pulling us from our beloved sins, and in our dying to them, if his love be planted in our hearts, that will sweeten it, and make us delight in it. Love desires nothing more than likeness, and shares willingly in all with the party loved; and above all love, this Divine love is purest and highest, and works most strongly that way; takes pleasure in that pain, and is a voluntary death, as Plato calls love. It is *strong as death*, says Solomon. Cant. viii. 6. As death makes the strongest body fall to the ground, so doth the love of Christ make the most active and lively sinner dead to his sin; and as death severs a man from his dearest and most familiar friends, thus doth the love of Christ, and his death flowing from it, sever the heart from its most beloved sins.

I beseech you, seek to have your hearts set against sin, to hate it, to wound it, and be dying daily to it. Be not satisfied, unless ye feel an abatement of it, and a life within you. Disdain that base service, and being bought at so high a rate, think yourselves too good to be slaves to any base lust. You are called to a more excellent and more honorable service. And of this suffering in the flesh, we may safely say, what the apostle speaks of the sufferings with and for Christ (Rom. viii. 17), that the partakers of these sufferings are co-heirs of glory with Christ: *If we suffer thus with him, we shall also be glorified with him;* if we die with him, we shall live with him for ever.

3. We have the actual improvement of this conformity: *Arm yourselves with the same mind*, or *thoughts* of this mortification. Death, taken naturally, in its proper sense, being an entire privation of life, admits not of degrees; but this figurative death, this mortification of the flesh in a Christian, is gradual. In so far as he is renewed, and is animated and acted on by the Spirit of Christ, he is thoroughly mortified (for this death, and that new life joined with it, and here added, *ver.* 2, go together and grow together); but because he is not totally renewed, and there is in him the remains of that corruption still, which is here called flesh, therefore it is his great task, to be gaining further upon it, and overcoming and mortifying it every day. And to this tend the frequent exhortations of this nature: *Mortify your members that are on the earth.* So Rom. vi., *Likewise reckon yourselves dead to sin*, and *Let it not reign in your mortal bodies.* Thus here, *Arm yourselves with the same mind*, or with this very thought. Consider and apply that suffering of Christ in the flesh, to the end that you with him suffering in the flesh, may cease from sin. Think that it ought to be thus, and seek that it may be thus, with you.

*Arm yourselves.*] There is still fighting, and sin will be molesting you; though

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wounded to death, yet will it struggle for life, and seek to wound its enemy; it will assault the graces that are in you. Do not think, if it be once struck, and you have given it a stab near to the heart, by the *sword of the Spirit*, that therefore it will stir no more. No, so long as you live in the flesh, in these bowels there will be remainders of the life of this flesh, your natural corruption; therefore you must be armed against it. Sin will not give you rest, so long as there is a drop of blood in its veins, one spark of life in it: and that will be so long as you have life here. This old man is stout, and will fight himself to death; and at the weakest it will rouse up itself, and exert its dying spirits, as men will do sometimes more eagerly than when they were not so weak, nor so near death.

This the children of God often find to their grief, that corruptions which they thought had been cold dead, stir and rise up again, and set upon them. A passion or lust, that after some great stroke lay a long while as dead, stirred not, and therefore they thought to have heard no more of it, though it shall never recover fully again, to be lively as before, yet will revive in such a measure as to molest, and possibly to foil them yet again. Therefore is it continually necessary that they live in arms, and put them not off to their dying day; till they put off the body, and be altogether free of the flesh. You may take the Lord's promise for victory in the end; that shall not fail; but do not promise yourself ease in the way, for that will not hold. If at some times you be undermost, give not all for lost: he hath often won the day, who hath been foiled and wounded in the fight. But likewise take not all for won, so as to have no more conflict, when sometimes you have the better, as in particular battles. Be not desperate when you lose, nor secure when you gain them: when it is worse with you, do not throw away your arms, nor lay them away when you are at best.

Now, the way to be armed is this, *the same mind:* How would my Lord, Christ, carry himself in this case? And what was *his* business in all places and companies? Was it not to do the will, and advance the glory of his Father? If I be injured and reviled, consider how would he do in this? Would he repay one injury with another, one reproach with another reproach? No, *being reviled, he reviled not again.* Well, through his strength, this shall be my way too. Thus ought it to be with the Christian, framing all his ways, and words, and very thoughts, upon that model, *the mind of Christ*, and studying in all things to walk even as he walked; studying it much, as the reason and rule of mortification, and drawing from it, as the real cause and spring of mortification.

The pious contemplation of his death will most powerfully kill the love of sin in the soul, and kindle an ardent hatred of it. The believer, looking on his Jesus as crucified for him and *wounded for his transgression*, and taking in deep thoughts of his spotless innocency, which deserved no such thing, and of his matchless love, which yet endured it all for him, will then naturally think, shall I be a friend to that which was his deadly enemy? Shall sin be sweet to me, which was so bitter to him, and that for my sake? Shall I ever lend it a good look, or entertain a favorable thought of that which shed my Lord's blood? Shall I live in that for which he died, and died to kill it in me. Oh! let it not be.

To the end it may not be, let such really apply *that* death, to work this on the soul; (for this is always to be added, and is the main thing indeed); by holding and fastening that death close to the soul, effectually to kill the effects of sin in it; to stifle and crush them dead, by pressing that death on the heart; looking on it, not only as a most complete model, but as having a most effectual virtue for this effect; and desiring him, entreating our Lord himself, who communicates himself and the virtue of his death to the believer, that he would powerfully cause it to flow in upon us, and let us feel the virtue of it.

It is, then, the only thriving and growing life, to be much in the lively contemplation and application of Jesus Christ; to be continually studying him, and conversing with him, and drawing from him, *receiving of his fulness, grace for grace.* John i. 16. Wouldst thou have much power against sin, and much increase of holiness, let thine eye be much on Christ; set thine heart on him; let it dwell in him, and be still with him. When sin is likely to prevail in any kind, go to him, tell him of the insurrection of his enemies, and thy inability to resist, and desire him to suppress them, and to help thee against them, that they may gain nothing by their stirring, but some new wound. If thy heart begin to be taken with, and move toward sin, lay it before him; the beams of his love shall eat out that fire of those sinful lusts. Wouldst thou have thy pride, and passions, and love of the world, and self-love, killed, go sue for the virtue of his death, and that shall do it. Seek his Spirit, the Spirit of meekness, and humility, and divine love. Look on him, and he shall draw thy heart heavenward, and unite it to himself, and make it like himself. And is not that the thing thou desirest?

VER. 2. That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

VER. 3. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries.

THE chains of sin are so strong, and so fastened on our nature, that there is in us no power to break them off, till a mightier and stronger Spirit than our own come into us. The Spirit of Christ dropped into the soul, makes it able to *break through a troop, and leap over a wall*, as David speaks of himself, when fur

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nished with the strength of his God. Psalm xviii. 29. Men's resolutions fall to nothing; and as a prisoner who attempts to escape, and does not, is bound faster, thus usually it is with men in their self-purposes of forsaking sin: they leave out Christ in the work, and so remain in their captivity, yea, it grows upon them. And while we press them to free themselves, and show not Christ to them, we put them upon an impossibility. But a look to him makes it feasible and easy. Faith in him, and that love to him which faith begets, break through and surmount all difficulties. It is the powerful love of Christ, that kills the love of sin, and kindles the love of holiness in the soul; makes it a willing sharer in his death, and so a happy partaker of his life. For that always follows, and must of necessity, as here is added: *he that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sin,*—is crucified and dead to it; but he loses nothing; yea, it is his great gain, to lose that deadly life of the flesh for a new spiritual life, a life indeed *living unto God;* that is the end why he so dies, that he may thus live—*That he no longer should live to the lusts of men,* and yet live far better, *live to the will of God.* He that is one with Christ by believing, is one with him throughout, in death and in life. As Christ rose from the dead, so he that is dead to sin with him, through the power of his death, rises to that new life with him, through the power of his resurrection. And these two constitute our sanctification, which whosoever do partake of Christ, and are found in him, do certainly draw from him. Thus are they joined, Rom. vi. 11: *Likewise reckon you yourselves dead indeed to sin, but alive to God,* and both, *through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

All they who do really come to Jesus Christ, as they come to him as their Savior to be clothed with him, and made righteous by him, so they come likewise to him as their Sanctifier, to be made new and holy by him, to die and live with him, to *follow the Lamb wheresoever he goes,* through the hardest sufferings, and death itself. And this spiritual suffering and dying with him, is the universal way of all his followers; they are all martyrs thus in the crucifying of sinful flesh, and so dying for him, and with him. And they may well go cheerfully through. Though it bear the unpleasant name of *death,* yet, as the other death is (which makes it so little terrible, yea, often to appear so very desirable to them), so is this, the way to a far more excellent and happy life; so that they may pass through it gladly, both for the company and the end of it. It is with Christ they go into his death, as unto life in his life. Though a believer might be free from these terms, he would not. No, surely. Could he be content with that easy life of sin, instead of the Divine life of Christ? No, he will do thus, and *not accept of deliverance, that he may obtain* (as the apostles speaks of the martyrs) *a better resurrection.* Heb. xi. 35. Think on it again, you to whom your sins are dear still, and this life sweet; you are yet far from Christ and his life.

The apostle, with the intent to press this more home, expresses more at large the nature of the opposite estates and lives that he speaks of, and so, 1. Sets before his Christian brethren the dignity of that new life; and then, 2. By a particular reflection upon the former life, he presses the change. The former life he calls a living *to the lusts of men;* this new spiritual life, a living *to the will of God.*

*The lusts of men.*] Such as are common to the corrupt nature of man; such as every man may find in himself, and perceive in others. The apostle, in the third verse more particularly, for further clearness, specifies those kinds of men that were most notorious in these lusts, and those kinds of lusts that were most notorious in men. Writing to the dispersed Jews, he calls sinful lusts *the will of the Gentiles,* as having least control of contrary light in them (and yet, the Jews walked in the same, though they had the law as a light and rule for avoiding of them); and implies, that these lusts were unbeseeming even their former condition as Jews, but much more unsuitable to them, as now Christians. Some of the grossest of these lusts he names, meaning all the rest, all the ways of sin, and so representing their vileness in the more lively manner. Not, as some take it, when they hear of such heinous sins, as if it were to lessen the evil of sins of a more civil nature by the comparison, or as if freedom from these were a blameless condition, and a change of it needless; no, the Holy Ghost means it just contrary, that we may judge of all sin, and of our sinful nature, by our estimate of those sins that are most discernible and abominable. All sin, though not equal in degree, yet is of one nature, and originally springs from one root, arising from the same unholy nature of man, and contrary to the same holy nature and will of God.

So then, 1. Those who walk in these highways of impiety, and yet will have the name of *Christians,* they are the shame of Christians, and the professed enemies of Jesus Christ, and of all others the most hateful to him: they seem to have taken on his name, for no other end than to shame and disgrace it. But he will vindicate himself, and the blot shall fall upon these impudent persons, who dare hold up their faces in the church of God as parts of it, and are indeed nothing but the dishonor of it, spots and blots; who dare profess to worship God as his people, and remain unclean, riotous, and profane persons. How suits thy sitting here before the Lord, and thy sitting with vile ungodly company on the ale-bench? How agrees the word, sounds it well, There goes a drunken Christian, an unclean, a basely covetous, or earthly-minded, Christian. And the naming of the latter is not besides the text, but agreeable to the very

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words of it; for the apostle warrants us to take it under the name of *idolatry*, and in that name he reckons it to be mortified by a Christian: Col. iii. 5. *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is* IDOLATRY.

2. But yet, men who are someway exempted from the blot of these foul impieties, may still remain slaves to sin, alive to it, and dead to God, living to the lusts of men, and not to the will of God, pleasing others and themselves, and displeasing him. And the smoothest, best bred, and most moralized natural man, is in this base thraldom; and he is the more miserable, in that he dreams of liberty in the midst of his chains, thinks himself clean by looking on those that wallow in gross profaneness; takes measure of himself by the most crooked lives of ungodly men about him, and so thinks himself very straight; but lays not the straight rule of the will of God to his ways and heart, which if he did, he would then discover much crookedness in his ways, and much more in his heart, that now he sees not, but takes it to be square and even.

Therefore I advise and desire you to look more narrowly to yourselves in this, and see whether you be not still living to your own lusts and wills instead of to God, seeking, in all your ways, to advance and please yourselves, and not him. Is not the bent of your hearts set that way? Do not your whole desires and endeavors run in that channel, how you and yours may be somebody, how you may have wherewithal to serve the flesh, and to be accounted of and respected among men? And if we trace it home, all a man's honoring and pleasing of others tends to, and ends in, pleasing of himself: it resolves into that. And is it not so meant by him? He pleases men, either that he may gain by them, or be respected by them, or that something that is still pleasing to himself may be the return of it. So, self is the grand idol, for which all other heart-idolatries are committed; and, indeed, in the unrenewed heart there is no scarcity of them. Oh! what multitudes, what heaps, if the wall were digged through, and the light of God going before us, and leading us in to see them! The natural motion and way of the natural heart, is no other than still seeking out new inventions, a forge of new gods, still either forming them to itself, or worshipping those it hath already framed; committing spiritual fornication from God, with the creature, and multiplying lovers everywhere, as it is tempted; as the Lord complains of his people, *upon every high hill, and under every green tree.* Jer. ii. 20; iii. 6.

You will not believe so much ill of yourselves, will not be convinced of this unpleasant but necessary truth; and this is a part of our self-pleasing, that we please ourselves in this, that we will not see it, either in our callings and ordinary ways, or in our religious exercises. For even in these, we naturally aim at nothing but ourselves; either our reputation, or, at best, our own safety and peace; either to stop the cry of conscience for the present, or to escape the wrath that is to come; but not in a spiritual regard of the will of God, and out of pure love to himself for himself; yet, thus it should be, and that love, the divine fire in all our sacrifices. The carnal mind is in the dark, and sees not its vileness in living to itself, will not confess it to be so. But when God comes into the soul, he lets it see itself, and all its idols and idolatries, and forces it to abhor and loathe itself for all its abominations: and having discovered its filthiness to itself, then he purges and cleanses it for himself, *from all its filthiness, and from all its idols* (Ezek. xxxvi. 25), according to his promise, and comes in and takes possession of it for himself, enthrones himself in the heart. And it is never right nor happy till that be done.

*But to the will of God.*] We readily take any little slight change for true conversion, but we may see here that we mistake it: it doth not barely knock off some obvious apparent enormities, but casts all in a new mould, alters the whole frame of the heart and life, kills a man, and makes him alive again. And this new life is contrary to the old; for the change is made with that intent, *that he live no longer to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.* He is now, indeed *a new creature*, having a new judgment and new thoughts of things, and so, accordingly, new desires and affections, and answerably to these, new actions. *Old things are past away and dead, and all things are become new.* 2 Cor. v. 17.

Political men have observed, that in states, if alterations must be, it is better to alter many things than a few. And physicians have the same remark for one's habit and custom for bodily health, upon the same ground; because things do so relate one to another, that except they be adapted and suited together in the change, it avails not; yea, it sometimes proves the worse in the whole, though a few things in particular seem to be bettered. Thus, half-reformations in a Christian turn to his prejudice; it is only best to be reformed throughout, and to give up with all idols; not to live one half to himself and the world, and, as it were, another half to God, for that is but falsely so, and, in reality, can not be. The only way is, to make a heap of all, to have all sacrificed together, and to live to no lust, but altogether and only to God. Thus it must be: there is no monster in the new creation, no half new creature—*either all, or not at all*, ὅλος ἢ μὴ ὅλως. We have to deal with the Maker and the Searcher of the heart in this turn, and he will have nothing unless he have the heart, and none of that neither, unless he have it all. If thou pass over into his kingdom, and become his subject, thou must have him for thy only sovereign. *Omnisque potestas impatiens*

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*consortis:* Royalty can admit of no rivalry, and least of all, the highest and best of all. If Christ be thy king, then his laws and sceptre must rule all in thee; thou must now acknowledge no foreign power; that will be treason.

And if he be thy husband, thou must renounce all others. Wilt thou provoke him to jealousy? Yea, beware how thou givest a thought or a look of thy affection any other way, for he will spy it, and will not endure it. The title of a husband is as strict and tender, as the other of a king.

It is only best to be thus: it is thy great advantage and happiness, to be thus entirely freed from so many tyrannous base lords, and to be now subject to only one, and he so great, and withal so gracious and sweet a king, *the Prince of Peace.* Thou wast hurried before, and racked with the very multitude of them. Thy lusts, so many cruel task-masters over thee, they gave thee no rest, and the work they set thee to was base and slavish, more than the burdens, and pots, and toiling in the clay of Egypt; thou wast held to work in the earth, to pain, and to soil and foul thyself with their drudgery.

Now thou hast but One to serve, and that is a great ease; and it is no slavery, but true honor, to serve so excellent a Lord, and in so high services; for he puts thee upon nothing but what is neat and what is honorable. Thou art as *a vessel of honor* in his house, for his best employments. Now thou art not in pain how to please this person and the other, nor needest thou vex thyself to gain men, to study their approbation and honor, nor to keep to thine own lusts and observe their will. Thou hast none but thy God to please in all; and if he be pleased, thou mayest disregard who be displeased. His will is not fickle and changing as men's are, and as thine own is. He hath told thee what he likes and desires, and he alters not; so that now, thou knowest whom thou hast to do withal, and what to do, whom to please, and what will please him, and this can not but much settle thy mind, and put thee at ease. Thou mayest say, heartily, as rejoicing in the change of so many for one, and of such for such a One, as the church says. Isa. xxvi. 13: *O Lord our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over me, but now, by thee only will I make mention of thy name;* now, none but thyself, not so much as the *name* of them any more, away with them: through thy grace, thou only shalt be my God. It can not endure that anything be named with thee.

Now, 1. That it may be thus, that we may wholly live *to the will of God*, we must *know* his will, what it is. Persons grossly ignorant of God, and of his will, can not live to him. We can not *have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness;* for HE *is light*, 1 John i. 6, 7. This takes off a great many among us, who have not so much as a common notion of the will of God. But, besides, that knowledge which is a part, and (I may say) the first part, of the renewed image of God, is not a natural knowledge of spiritual things, merely attained by human teaching or industry, but it is a beam of God's own, issuing from himself, both enlightening and enlivening the whole soul: it gains the affection and stirs to action, and so, indeed, it acts, and increases by acting; for the more we walk according to what we know of the will of God, the more we shall be advanced to know more. This is the real *proving what is his good, and holy, and acceptable will.* Romans xii. 2. So says Christ, *If any one will do the will of my Father, he shall know of the doctrine.* John vii. 17. Our lying off from the lively use of known truth, keeps us low in the knowledge of God and communion with him.

2. So, then, upon that knowledge of God's will, where it is spiritual and from himself, follows the suiting of the heart with it, the affections taking the stamp of it, and agreeing with it, *receiving the truth in the love of it*, so that the heart may be transformed into it; and now it is not driven to obedience violently, but sweetly moving to it, by love within the heart, framed to the love of God, and so of his will.

3. As Divine knowledge begets this affection, so this affection will bring forth action, real obedience. For these three are inseparably linked, and each dependant on, and the product of, the others. The affection is no blind, but flowing from knowledge; nor the actual obedience constrained, but flowing from affection; and the affection is not idle, seeing it brings forth obedience; nor is the knowledge dead, seeing it begets affection.

Thus the renewed, the living Christian, is all for God, a sacrifice entirely offered up to God, and *a living sacrifice*, which lives to God. He takes no more notice of his own carnal will; hath renounced that to embrace the holy will of God; and therefore, though there is a contrary law and will in him, yet he does not acknowledge it, but only the law of Christ, as now established in him; that law of love, by which he is sweetly and willingly led. Real obedience consults not now with flesh and blood, what will please them but only inquires what will please his God, and knowing his mind, thus resolves to demur no more, nor to ask consent of any other; that he will do, and it is reason enough to him: "My Lord wills it, therefore, in his strength, I will do it; for now I live to his will, it is my life to study and obey it."

Now, we know what is the true character of the redeemed of Christ, that they are freed from the service of themselves and of the world, yea, dead to it, and have no life but for God, as altogether his.

Let it, then, be our study and ambition to attain this, and to grow in it; to be daily further freed from all other ways and desires, and more wholly addicted to the will of our God; displeased when we find anything else

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stir or move within us but that, making that the spring of our notion in every work.

1. Because we know that his sovereign will is (and is most justly) the glory of his name, therefore we are not to rest till this be set up in our view, as our end in all things, and we are to account all our plausible doings as hateful (as indeed they are), which are not aimed *at this* end; yea, endeavoring to have it as frequently and as expressly before us as we can, still keeping our eye on the mark; throwing away, yea, undoing our own interest, not seeking ourselves in anything, but him in all.

2. As living to his will is in all things to be our end, so, in all the way to that end, it is to be the rule of every step. For we can not attain his end but in his way; nor can we attain it without a resignation of the way to his prescription, taking all our directions from him, how we shall honor him in all. The soul that lives to him, hath enough to make *anything* not only warrantable but amiable in seeking his will; and he not only does it, but delights to do it. This is to live to him, to find *it our* life; as we speak of a work wherein men do most, and with most delight employ themselves. That such a lust be crucified, is it thy will, Lord? Then, no more advising, no more delay. How dear soever that was when I lived to it, it is now as hateful, seeing I live to thee who hatest it. Wilt thou have me forget an injury, though a great one, and love the person that hath wronged me? While I lived to myself and my passions, this had been hard. But now, how sweet is it! seeing I live to thee, and am glad to be put upon things most opposite to my corrupt heart; glad to trample upon my own will, to follow thine. And this I daily aspire to and aim at, to have no will of my own, but that thine be in me, that I may live to thee, as one with thee, and thou my rule and delight, yea, not to use the very natural comforts of my life, but for thee; to eat, and drink and sleep for thee; and not to please myself, but to be enabled to serve and please thee; to make one offering of myself and all my actions to thee, my Lord.

Oh! it is the only sweet life, to be living thus, and daily learning to live more fully thus! It is heaven this, a little scantling of it here, and a pledge of whole heaven. This is indeed the life of Christ, not only like his, but one with his; it is his spirit, his life derived into the soul, and therefore both the most excellent, and certainly the most permanent life, for *He dieth no more*, and therefore this his life can not be extinguished. Hence is the perseverance of the saints; because they have one life with Christ, and so are alive unto God, once for all, for ever.

It is true, the former custom of sin would plead with grace old possession; and this the apostle implies here, that because *formerly we lived* to our lusts, they will urge that; but he teaches us to beat it directly back on them, and turn the edge of it as a most strong reason against them: "True, you had so long time of us, the more is our sorrow and shame, and the more reason that it be no longer so.

*The rest of his time in the flesh* (that is, in this body) is not to be spent as the foregoing, *in living to the flesh*, that is, the corrupt lusts of it, and the common ways of the world; but, as often as the Christian looks back on that, he *is* to find it as a spur in his side, to be the more earnest, and more wholly busied in living much to God, having lived so long contrary to him, in living to the flesh. *The past may suffice.* There is a rhetorical figure (*a lyptote*) in that expression, meaning much more than the words express: "It is *enough* —oh! *too much*, to have lived so long so miserable a life."

"Now," says the Christian, "O corrupt lusts and deluding world, look for no more: I have served you too long. The rest, whatsoever it is, must be to the Lord, to live to him by whom I live; and ashamed and grieved I am I was so long in beginning; so much past, it may be the most of my short race past, before I took notice of God, or looked toward him. Oh! how have I lost, and worse than lost, all my by-past days! Now, had I the advantage and abilities of many men, and were I to live many ages, all should be to live to my God, and honor him. And what strength I have, and what time I shall have, through his grace, shall be wholly his." And when any Christian hath thus resolved, his intended life being so imperfect, and the time so short, the poorness of the offer would break his heart, were there not an eternity before him, wherein he shall live to his God, and in him, without blemish and without end.

Spiritual things being once discerned by a spiritual light, the whole soul is carried after them; and the ways of holiness are never truly sweet, till they be thoroughly embraced, and till there be a full renunciation of all that is contrary to them. All his former ways of wandering from God, are very hateful to a Christian who is indeed returned and brought home; and those are most of all hateful, wherein he hath most wandered and most delighted. A sight of Christ gains the heart, makes it break from all entanglements, both of its own lusts, and of the profane world about it. And these are the two things the apostle here aims at. Exhorting Christians to the study of newness of life, and showing the necessity of it, that they can not be Christians without it, he opposes their new estate and engagement, to the old customs of their former condition, and to the continuing custom and conceit of the ungodly world, that against both they may maintain that rank and dignity to which now they are called, and, in a holy disdain of both, walk as the redeemed of the Lord. Their own former custom he speaks to in these verses, and to the custom and opinion of the world, in those which follow. Both of these will set strong upon a



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man, especially while he is yet weak, and newly entered into that new estate.

Now, as to the first, his old acquaintance, his wonted lusts, will not fail to bestir themselves to accost him in their most obliging, familiar way, and represent their long-continued friendship. But the Christian, following the principles of his new being, will not entertain any long discourse with them, but cut them short, tell them that the change he hath made he avows, and finds it so happy, that these former delights may put off hopes of regaining him. No, they dress themselves in their best array, and put on all their ornaments, and say, as that known word of the courtesan, *I am the same I was;* the Christian will answer as he did, *I am not the same I was.* And not only thus will he turn off the plea of former acquaintance that sin makes, but turn it back upon it, as in his present thoughts, making much against it. "The longer I was so deluded, the more reason now that I be wiser; the more time so mispent, the more pressing necessity of redeeming it. Oh! I have too long lived in that vile slavery. All was but husks I fed on. *I was laying out my money for that which was no bread, and my labor for that which satisfied not.* Isa. lv. 2. Now, I am on the pursuit of a good that I am sure will satisfy, will fill the largest desires of my soul: and shall I be sparing and slack, or shall anything call me off from it? Let it not be. I who took so much pains, early and late, to serve and sacrifice to so base a god, shall I not now live more to my new Lord, the living God, and sacrifice my time and strength, and my whole self, to him?"

And this is still the regret of the sensible Christian, that he can not attain to that unwearied diligence and that strong bent of affection, in seeking communion with God, and living to him, which once he had for the service of sin: he wonders that it should be thus with him, not to equal that which it were so reasonable that he should so far exceed.

It is, beyond expression, a thing to be lamented, that so small a number of men regard God, the author of their being, that so few live to him in whom they live, returning that being and life they have, and all their enjoyments, as is due, to him from whom they all flow. And then, how pitiful is it, that the small number who are thus minded, mind it so remissly and coldly, and are so far outstripped by the *children of this world*, who follow painted follies and lies with more eagerness and industry than the *children of wisdom* do that certain and solid blessedness which they seek after? *Plus illi ad vanitatem, quam nos ad veritatem:* They are more intent upon vanity, than we upon verity. Strange! that men should do so much violency one to another, and to themselves in body and mind, for trifles and chaff; and that there is so little to be found of that allowed and commanded *violence*, for *a kingdom*, and *such a kingdom, that can not be moved* (Heb. xii. 28); a word too high for all the monarchies under the sun.

And should not our diligence and violence in this so worthy a design, be so much the greater, the later we begin to pursue it? They tell it of Cæsar, that when he passed into Spain, meeting there with Alexander's statue, it occasioned him to weep, considering that he was up so much more early, having performed so many conquests in those years, wherein he thought he himself had done nothing, and was yet but beginning. Truly, it will be a sad thought to a really renewed mind, to look back on the flower of youth and strength as lost in vanity; if not in gross profaneness, yet, in self-serving and self-pleasing, and in ignorance and neglect of God. And perceiving their few years so far spent ere they set out, they will account days precious, and make the more haste, and desire, with holy David, *enlarged hearts to run the way of God's commandments.* Psalm cxix. 32. They will study to live much in a little time; and, having lived all the past time to no purpose, will be sensible they have none now to spare upon the lusts and ways of the flesh, and vain societies and visits. Yea, they will be redeeming all they can, even from their necessary affairs, for that which is more necessary than all other necessities, *that one thing needful*, to learn the will of our God, and live to it; this is our business, our *high calling*, the main and most excellent of all our employments.

Not that we are to cast off our particular callings, or omit due diligence in them; for that will prove a snare, and involve a person in things more opposite to godliness. But certainly, this *living to God* requires, 1. A fit measuring of thy own ability for affairs, and, as far as thou canst choose, fitting thy load to thy shoulders, not surcharging thyself with it. An excessive burden of businesses, either by the greatness or the multitude of them, will not fail to entangle thee, and depress thy mind, and will hold it so down, that thou shalt not find it possible to walk upright and look upward, with that freedom and frequency that become heirs of heaven.

2. The measure of thy affairs being adapted, look to thy affection in them, that it be regulated too. Thy heart may be engaged in thy little business as much, if thou watch it not, as in many and great affairs. A man may drown in a little brook or pool, as well as in a great river, if he be down and plunge himself into it, and put his head under water. Some care thou must have, that thou mayest not care. Those things that are thorns indeed, thou must make a hedge of them, to keep out those temptations that accompany sloth, and extreme want that waits on it; but let them be the hedge: suffer them not to grow within the garden. *If riches increase, set not thy heart on them*, nor

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set them in thy heart. That place is due to another, is made to be the garden of thy beloved Lord, made for the best plants and flowers, and there they ought to grow, the love of God, and faith, and meekness, and the other fragrant graces of the Spirit. And know, that this is no common nor easy matter, to keep the heart disengaged in the midst of affairs, that still it be reserved for him whose right it is.

3. Not only labor to keep thy mind spiritual in itself, but by it put a spiritual stamp even upon thy temporal employments; and so thou shalt live to God, not only without prejudice of thy calling, but even in it, and shalt converse with him in thy shop, or in the field, or in thy journey, doing all in obedience to him, and offering all, and thyself withal, as a sacrifice to him; thou still with him, and he still with thee, in all. This is to live to the will of God indeed, to follow his direction, and intend his glory in all. Thus the wife, in the very oversight of her house, and the husband in his affairs abroad, may be living to God, raising their low employments to a high quality this way: Lord, even this mean work I do for thee, complying with thy will, who hast put me in this station, and given me this task. *Thy will be done.* Lord, I offer up even this work to thee. Accept of me, and of my desire to obey thee in all. And as in their work, so, in their refreshments and rest, Christians do all for him. *Whether ye eat or drink*, says the apostle (1 Cor. x. 31), *or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God;* doing all for this reason, because it is his will, and for this end, that he may have glory; bending the use of all our strength and all his mercies that way; setting this mark on all our designs and ways, This for the glory of my God, and, This further for his glory, and so from one thing to another throughout our whole life. This is the art of keeping the heart spiritual in all affairs, yea, of spiritualizing the affairs themselves in their use, that in themselves are earthly. This is the *elixir* that turns lower metal into gold, the mean actions of this life, in a Christian's hands, into obedience and holy offerings unto God.

And were we acquainted with the way of intermixing holy thoughts, ejaculatory eyings of God, in our ordinary ways, it would keep the heart in a sweet temper all the day long, and have an excellent influence into all our ordinary actions and holy performances, at those times when we apply ourselves solemnly to them. Our hearts would be near them, not so far off to seek and call in, as usually they are through the neglect of this. This were to *walk with God* indeed; to go all the day long as in our Father's hand; whereas, without this, our praying morning and evening looks but as a formal visit, not delighting in that constant converse which yet is our happiness and honor, and makes all estates sweet. This would refresh us in the hardest labor; as they that carry the spices from Arabia are refreshed with the smell of them in their journey, and some observe, that it keeps their strength, and frees them from fainting.

If you will then live to God indeed, be not satisfied without the constant regard of him; and whosoever hath attained most of it, study it yet more, *to set the Lord always before you*, as David professeth, and then shall you have that comfort that he adds, he shall be still *at your right hand, that you shall not be moved.* Psalm xvi. 8.

And you that are yet to begin this, think what his patience is, that after you have slighted so many calls, you may yet begin to seek him, and live to him. And then, consider, if you still despise all this goodness, how soon it may be otherwise; you may be past the reach of this call, and may not begin, but be cut off for ever from the hopes of it. Oh, how sad an estate! and the more so, by the remembrance of these slighted offers and invitations! Will you then yet return? You that would share in Christ, let go those lusts to which you have hitherto lived, and embrace him, and in him there is spirit and life for you. He shall enable you to live this heavenly life to the will of God, *His God and your God, and his Father and your Father.* John xx. 17. Oh! delay no longer this happy change. How soon may that puff of breath that is in thy nostrils, who hearest this, be extinguished! And art thou willing to die in thy sins, rather than that they should die before thee? Thinkest thou it a pain to live to the will of God? Surely it will be more pain to lie under his eternal wrath. Oh! thou knowest not how sweet they find it who have tried it. Or thinkest thou, I will afterward? Who can make thee sure either of that afterward, or of that will? If but afterward, why not now presently, without further debate? Hast thou not served sin long enough? May not the time passed in that service, suffice? yea, is it not too much? Wouldst thou only live unto God as little time as may be, and think the dregs of thy life good enough for him? What ingratitude and gross folly is this! Yea, though thou wert sure of coming unto him and being accepted, yet, if thou knewest him in any measure, thou wouldst not think it a privilege to defer it, but willingly choose to be free from the world and thy lusts, to be immediately his, and wouldst, with David, *make haste, and not delay to keep his righteous judgments.* All the time thou livest without him, what a filthy, wretched life is it, if that can be called life that is without him! To live to sin, is to live still in a dungeon; but to live to the will of God, is to walk in liberty and light, to walk by light unto light, by the beginnings of it to the fulness of it, which is in his presence.

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VER. 4. Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:
VER. 5. Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

GRACE, until it reach its home and end in glory, is still in conflict; there is a restless party within and without, yea, the whole world against it. It is a stranger here, and is accounted and used as such. *They think it strange that you run not with them, and they speak evil of you:* these wondering thoughts they vent in reproaching words.

In these two verses we have these three things: 1. The Christian's opposite course to that of the world. 2. The world's opposite thoughts and speeches of this course. 3. The supreme and final judgment of both.

1. The opposite course, in that *They run to excesses of riot—You run not with them.* They run to excesses (ἀσωτίας) *of riot* or *luxury.* Though all natural men are not, in the grossest kind, guilty of this, yet they are all of them in some way truly riotous or luxurious, lavishing away themselves, and their days, upon the poor perishing delights of sin, each according to his own palate and humor. As all persons that are riotous, in the common sense of it, gluttons or drunkards, do not love the same kind of meats or drink, but have several relishes or appetites, yet they agree in the nature of the sin; so the notion enlarged after that same manner, to the different custom of corrupt nature, takes in all the ways of sin: some are glutting in, and continually drunk with pleasures and carnal enjoyments; others, with the cares of this life, which our Savior reckons with surfeiting and drunkenness, as being a kind of it, and surcharging the heart as they do: as there he expresses it, Luke xxi. 34, *Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life.* Whatsoever it is that draws away the heart from God, that, how plausible soever, doth debauch and destroy us: we spend and undo ourselves upon it, as the word signifies, ἀσωτία, a making havoc of all. And the other word, ἀνάχυσις, signifies profusion, and dissolute lavishing, a pouring out of the affections upon vanity; they are scattered and defiled as water spilt upon the ground, that can not be cleansed nor gathered up again. And, indeed, it passes all our skill and strength, to recover and recollect our hearts for God; he only can do it for himself. He who made it, can gather it, and cleanse it, and make it anew, and unite it to himself. Oh! what a scattered, broken, unstable thing is the carnal heart, till it be changed, falling in love with every gay folly it meets withal, and running out to rest profusely upon things like its vain self, which suit and agree with it, and serve its lusts! It can dream and muse upon these long enough, upon anything that feeds the earthliness or pride of it; it can be prodigal of hours, and let out floods of thoughts, where a little is too much, but is bounded and straitened where all are too little; hath not one fixed thought in a whole day to spare for God.

And truly, this *running out* of the heart is a continual drunkenness and madness: it is not capable of reason, and will not be stopped in its current by any persuasion; it is *mad upon its idols,* as the prophet speaks, Jer. l. 38. You may as well speak to a river in its course, and bid it stay, as speak to an impenitent sinner in the course of his iniquity; and all the other means you can use, is but as the putting of your finger to a rapid stream, to stay it. But there is a Hand that can both stop and turn the most impetuous torrent of the heart, be it even *the heart of a king,* which will least endure any other controlment. Prov. xxi. 1.

Now, as the ungodly world naturally moves to this profusion with a strong and swift motion, *runs* to it, so, it *runs together* to it, and that makes the current both the stronger and the swifter; as a number of brooks falling into one main channel, make a mighty stream. And every man naturally is, in his birth, and in the course of his life, just as a brook, that of itself is carried to that stream of sin which is in the world, and then falling into it, is carried rapidly along with it. And if every sinner, taken apart, be so incontrovertible by all created power how much more hard a task is a public reformation, the turning of a land from its course of wickedness! All that is set to dam up their way, doth at the best but stay them a little, and they swell, and rise, and run over with more noise and violence than if they had not been stopped. Thus we find outward restraints prove, and thus the very public judgments of God on us. They may have made a little interruption, but, upon the abatement of them, the course of sin, in all kinds, seems to be now more fierce, as it were, to regain the time lost in that constrained forbearance. So that we see the need of much prayer to entreat his powerful hand, that can turn the course of Jordan, that he would work, not a temporary, but an abiding change of the course of this land, and cause many souls to look upon Jesus Christ and flow into him, as the word is in Psalm xxxiv. 5.

This is their course, but *you run not with them.* The godly are a small and weak company, and yet, run counter to the grand torrent of the world, just against them. And there is a Spirit within them, whence that their contrary motion flows; a Spirit strong enough to maintain it in them, against all the crowd and combined course of the ungodly. *Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* 1 John iv. 4. As Lot in Sodom, his righteous soul was not carried with them, but was *vexed with their ungodly doings.* There is, to a believer, the example of Christ, to set against the example of the

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world, and the Spirit of Christ against the spirit of the world; and these are by far the more excellent and the stronger. Faith looking to him, and drawing virtue from him, makes the soul surmount all discouragements and oppositions. So, Heb. xii. 2: *Looking to Jesus:* and that not only as an example worthy to oppose to all the world's examples: the saints were so, yet he more than they all; but further, he is *the Author and Finisher of our faith;* and so we eye him, as having *endured the cross, and despised the shame*, and as having *sat down at the right hand of the throne of God*, not only that, in doing so, we may follow him in that way, unto that end, as our pattern, but as our head, from whom we borrow our strength so to follow *the Author and Finisher of our faith.* And so, I John v. 4: *This is our victory, whereby we overcome the world, even our faith.*

The Spirit of God shows the believer clearly both the baseness of the ways of sin, and the wretched measure of their end. That divine light discovers the fading and false blush of the pleasures of sin, that there is nothing under them but true deformity and rottenness, which the deluded, gross world does not see, but takes the first appearance of it for true and solid beauty, and so is enamored with a painted strumpet. And as he sees the vileness of that love of sin, he sees the final unhappiness of it, that *her ways lead to the chambers of death.* Methinks a believer is as one standing upon a high tower, who sees the way wherein the world runs, in a valley, as an unavoidable precipice, a steep edge hanging over the bottomless pit, where all that are not reclaimed, fall over before they be aware; this they, in their low way, perceive not, and therefore walk and run on in the smooth pleasures and ease of it toward their perdition; but he that sees the end, will not *run with them.*

And as he hath, by that light of the Spirit, this clear reason for thinking on and taking another course, so, by that Spirit, he hath a very natural bent to a contrary motion, so that he can not be one with them. That Spirit moves him upward whence it came, and makes that, in so far as he is renewed, his natural motion. Though he hath a clog of flesh that cleaves to him, and so breeds him some difficulty, yet, in the strength of that new nature, he overcomes it, and goes on till he attain his end, where all the difficulty in the way presently is over-rewarded and forgotten. This makes amends for every weary step, that every one of those who walk in that way, shall *appear in Zion before God.* Psalm lxxxiv. 6.

2. We have their opposite thoughts and speeches of each other. *They think it strange, speaking evil of you.* The Christian and the carnal man are most wonderful to each other. The one wonders to see the other walk so strictly, and deny himself to those carnal liberties which the most take, and take for so necessary, that they think they could not live without them. And the Christian thinks it strange that men should be so bewitched, and still remain children in the vanity of their turmoil, wearying and humoring themselves from morning to night, running after stories and fancies, ever busy doing nothing wonders that the delights of earth and sin can so long entertain and please men, and persuade them to give Jesus Christ so many refusals, to turn from their life and happiness, and choose to be miserable, yea, and take much pains to make themselves miserable. He knows the depravedness and blindness of nature in this, knows it by himself, that once he was so, and therefore wonders not so much at them as they do at him; yet, the unreasonableness and phrensy of that course now appear to him in so strong a light, that he can not but wonder at these woful mistakes. But the ungodly wonder far more at him, not knowing the inward cause of his different choice and way. The believer, as we said, is upon the hill; he is going up, and looking back on them in the valley, sees their way tending to, and ending in death, and calls them to retire from it as loud as he can; he tells them the danger, but either they hear not, nor understand his language, or will not believe him: finding present ease and delight in their way, they will not consider and suspect the end of it, but they judge him the fool who will not share with them, and take that way where such multitudes go, and with such ease, and some of them with their train, and horses, and coaches, and all their pomp, while he, and a few straggling poor creatures like him, are climbing up a craggy steep hill, and will by no means come off from that way, and partake of theirs; not knowing, or not believing that at the top of that hill he climbs, is that happy glorious city *the new Jerusalem*, whereof he is a citizen, and whither he is tending; not believing that he knows the end both of their way and of his own, and therefore would reclaim them if he could, but will by no means *return unto them:* as the Lord commanded the prophet, *Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them.* Jer. xv. 19.

The world thinks it strange that a Christian can spend so much time in secret prayer, not knowing, nor being able to conceive of the sweetness of the communion with God which he attains in that way. Yea, while he feels it not, how sweet it is, beyond the world's enjoyments, to be but seeking after it, and waiting for it! Oh, the delight that there is in the bitterest exercise of repentance, in the very tears, much more in the succeeding harvest of joy! *Incontinentes veræ voluptatis ignari*, says Aristotle: The intemperate are strangers to true pleasure. It is strange unto a carnal man, to see the child of God disdain the pleasures of sin; he knows not the higher and purer delights and pleasures that

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the Christian is called to, and of which he hath, it may be, some part at present, but, however, the fulness of them in assured hope.

The strangeness of the world's way to the Christian, and of his to it, though that is somewhat unnatural, yet affects them very differently. He looks on the deluded sinner with pity, they on him with hate. Their part, which is here expressed, of wondering, breaks out in reviling: *They speak evil of you;* and what is their voice? "What mean these precise fools?" will they readily say. "What course is this they take, contrary to all the world? Will they make a new religion, and condemn all their honest, civil neighbors that are not like them? Ay, forsooth, do all go to hell, think you, except you, and those that follow your way? We are for no more than good fellowship and liberty; and as for so much reading and praying, those are but brain-sick, melancholy conceits: a man may go to heaven like his neighbor, without all this ado." Thus they let fly at their pleasure. But this troubles not the composed Christian's mind at all: while curs snarl and bark about him, the sober traveller goes on his way, and regards them not. He that is acquainted with the way of holiness, can more than endure the counter-blasts and airs of scoffs and revilings; he accounts them his glory and his riches. So Moses *esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.* Heb. xi. 26. And beside many other things to animate, we have this which is here expressed:—

3dly, The supreme and final judgment. Oh, how full is it! *They shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead* —hath this *in readiness,* τῷ ἑτοίμως ἔχοντι, hath the day set; and it shall surely come, though you think it far off.

Though the wicked themselves forget their scoffs against the godly, and though the Christian slights them, and lets them pass, they pass not so; they are all registered, and the great court-day shall call them to account for all these riots and excesses, and withal, for all their reproaches of the godly, who would not run with them in these ways. Tremble, then, ye despisers and mockers of holiness, though you come not near it. What will you do when those you reviled shall appear glorious in your sight, and their King, the king of saints here, much more glorious, and his glory their joy, and all terror to you? Oh! then, all faces that could look out disdainfully upon religion and the professors of it, shall *gather blackness,* and be bathed with shame, and the despised saints of God shall shout so much the more for joy.

You that would rejoice, then, in the appearing of that holy Lord and Judge of the world, let your way be now in holiness. Avoid and hate the common ways of the wicked world; they live in their foolish opinion, and that shall quickly end, but the sentence of that day shall stand for ever.

VER. 6. **But for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit.**

IT is a thing of prime concernment for a Christian, to be rightly informed, and frequently put in mind, what is the true estate and nature of a Christian; for this, the multitude of those that bear that name, either know not, or commonly forget, and so are carried away with the vain fancies and mistakes of the world. The apostle hath characterized Christianity very clearly to us in this place, by that which is the very nature of it, *conformity with Christ,* and that which is necessarily consequent upon that, *disconformity with the world.* And as the nature and natural properties of things hold universally, those who in all ages are effectually called by the gospel, are thus moulded and framed by it. Thus it was, says the apostle, with your brethren who are now at rest, as many as received the gospel; and for this end was it preached to them, *that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit.*

We have here, 1. The preaching of the gospel as the suitable means to a certain end. 2. The express nature of that end.

1. *For this cause was the gospel preached.* There is a particular end, and that very important, for which the preaching of the gospel is intended; this end many consider not, hearing it as if it were to no end, or not propounding a fixed, determined end in the hearing. This, therefore, is to be considered by those who preach this gospel, that they aim aright in it at this end, and at no other—no self-end. The legal priests were not to be squint-eyed (Lev. xxi. 20), nor must evangelical ministers be thus squinting to base gain, or vain applause. They should also make it their study, to find in themselves this work, this *living to God;* otherwise, they can not skilfully or faithfully apply their gifts to work this effect on their hearers: and therefore acquaintance with God is most necessary.

How sounds it, to many of us at least, but as a well-contrived story, whose use is to amuse us, and possible delight us a little, and there is an end—and indeed no end, for this turns the most serious and most glorious of all messages into an empty sound. If we awake and give it a hearing, it is much: but for anything further, how few deeply beforehand consider: "I have a dead heart; therefore will I go unto the word of life, that it may be quickened. It is frozen; I will go and lay it before the warm beams of that Sun which shines in the gospel. My corruptions are mighty and strong, and grace, if there be any in my heart, is exceeding weak; but there is in the gospel a power to weaken and kill sin, and to strengthen grace, and this being the intent of my wise God in appointing it, it shall be my desire and purpose in resorting to it, to find it to me according to

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his gracious design; to have faith in my Christ, the fountain of my life, more strengthened, and made more active in drawing from him; to have my heart more refined and spiritualized, and to have the sluice of repentance opened, and my affections to Divine things enlarged, more hatred of sin, and more love of God and communion with him."

Ask yourselves concerning former times; and, to take yourselves even now, inquire within, "Why came I hither this day? What had I in mine eye and desires this morning ere I came forth, and in my way as I was coming? Did I seriously propound an end, or not; and what was my end?" Nor doth the mere custom of mentioning this in prayer, satisfy the question; for this, as other such things usually do in our hand, may turn to a lifeless form, and have no heat of spiritual affection, none of David's panting and breathing after God in his ordinances; such desires as will not be stilled without a measure of attainment, as the child's desire of the breast, as our apostle resembles it, ch. ii. 1.

And then, again, being returned home, reflect on your hearts: "Much hath been heard, but is there anything done by it? Have I gained my point? It was not simply to pass a little time that I went, or to pass it with delight in hearing, *rejoicing in that light*, as they did in St. John Baptist's *for a season* [πρὸς ὥραν], as long as the hour lasts. It was not to have my ear pleased, but my heart changed; not to learn some new notions, and carry them cold in my head, but to be quickened and purified, and *renewed in the spirit of my mind*. Is this done? Think I now with greater esteem of Christ, and the life of faith, and the happiness of a Christian? And are such thoughts solid and abiding with me? What sin have I left behind? What grace of the Spirit have I brought home? Or what new degree, or, at least, new desire of it, a living desire, that will follow its point? Oh! this were good repetition."

It is a strange folly in multitudes of us, to set ourselves no mark, to propound no end in the hearing of the gospel. The merchant sails not merely that he may sail, but for traffic, and traffics that he may be rich. The husbandman ploughs not merely to keep himself busy, with no further end, but ploughs that he may sow, and sows that he may reap with advantage. And shall we do the most excellent and fruitful work fruitlessly, hear only to hear, and look no further? This is indeed a great vanity, and a great misery, to lose that labor, and gain nothing by it, which duly used, would be, of all others, most advantageous and gainful: and yet all meetings are full of this!

Now, when you come, it is not simply to hear a discourse, and relish or dislike it in hearing, but a matter of life and death; of eternal death, and eternal life; and the spiritual life, begotten and nourished by the word, is the beginning of that eternal life. It follows,

*To them that are dead.*] By which, I conceive, he intends such as had heard and believed the gospel, when it came to them, and now were dead. And this, I think, he doth to strengthen those brethren to whom he writes; he commends the gospel, to the intent that they might not think the condition and end of it hard: as our Savior mollifies the matter of outward sufferings thus: *So persecuted they the prophets that were before you*, Matthew v. 12; and the apostle afterward, in this chapter, uses the same reason in that same subject. So here, that they might not judge the point of mortification he presses, so grievous, as naturally men will do, he tells them, it is the constant end of the gospel, and that they who have been saved by it, went that same way he points out to them. They that are dead before you, died in this way that I press on you, before they died: and the gospel was preached to them for that very end.

Men pass away, and others succeed, but the gospel is still the same, hath the same tenor and substance, and the same ends. So Solomon speaks of the heavens and earth, that they remain the same, while *one generation passes, and another cometh.* Eccl. i. 4. The gospel surpasses both in its stability, as our Savior testifies: *They shall pass away, but not one jot of this word.* Matthew v. 18. And indeed they wear and wax old, as the apostle teaches us; but the gospel is, from one age to another, of most unalterable integrity, hath still the same vigor and powerful influence as at the first.

They who formerly received the gospel, received it upon these terms, therefore think it not hard. And they *are* now *dead;* all the difficulty of that work of dying to sin, is now over with them. If they had not died *to* their sins by the gospel, they had died *in* them, after a while, and so died eternally. It is therefore a wise prevention, to have sin judged and put to death in us before we die. If we will not part with sin, if we die in it, and with it, we and our sin perish together; but if it die first before us, then we live for ever.

And what thinkest thou of thy carnal will and all the delights of sin? What is the longest term of its life? Uncertain it is, but most certainly very short; thou and these pleasures must be severed and parted within a little time: however, thou must die, and then they die, and you never meet again. Now, were it not the wisest course to part a little sooner with them, and let them die before thee, that thou mayest inherit eternal life, and eternal delights in it, *pleasures for evermore?* It is the only wise bargain; let us therefore delay it no longer.

This is our season of enjoying the sweetness of the gospel. Others heard it before us in the places which now we fill; and now they are removed, and we must remove shortly, and leave our places to others, to speak and hear in. It is high time we were consid-

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ering what we do here, to what end we speak and hear: high time to lay hold on that salvation which is held forth unto us, and that we may lay hold on it, to let go our hold of sin and those perishing things we hold so firm, and cleave so fast to. Do they that are dead, who heard and obeyed the gospel, now repent of their repentance and mortifying of the flesh? Or rather, do they not think ten thousand times more pains, were it for many ages, all too little for a moment of that which now they enjoy, and shall enjoy to eternity? And they that are dead, who heard the gospel and slighted it, if such a thing might be, what would they give for one of those opportunities which now we daily have, and daily lose, and have no fruit or esteem of them! You have lately seen, at least many of you, and you that shifted the sight, have heard of numbers, cut off in a little time, whole families swept away by the late stroke of God's hand,* many of which did think no other but that they might have still been with you here in this place and exercise, at this time, and many years after this. And yet, who hath laid to heart the lengthening out of his day, and considered it more as an opportunity of securing that higher and happier life, than as a little protracting of this wretched life, which is hastening to an end? Oh! therefore be entreated *to-day, while it is called To-day, not to harden your hearts.* Though the pestilence doth not now affright you so, yet, that standing mortality, and the decay of these earthen lodges, tell us that shortly we shall cease to preach and hear this gospel. Did we consider, it would excite us to a more earnest search after our evidences of that eternal life that is set before us in the gospel; and we should seek them in the characters of that spiritual life which is the beginning of eternal life within us, and is wrought by the gospel in all the heirs of salvation.

Think therefore wisely of these two things, of what is the proper end of the gospel, and of the approaching end of thy days; and let thy certainty of this latter, drive thee to seek more certainty of the former, that thou mayest partake of it; and then, this again will make the thoughts of the other sweet to thee. That visage of death, that is so terrible to unchanged sinners, shall be amiable to thine eye. Having found a life in the gospel as happy and lasting as this miserable and vanishing, and seeing the perfection of that life on the other side of death, thou wilt long for the passage.

Be more serious in this matter of daily hearing the gospel. Consider why it is sent to thee, and what it brings, and think—It is too long I have slighted its message, and many who have done so are cut off, and shall hear it no more; I have it once more inviting me, and to me this may be the last invitation. And in these thoughts, ere you come, bow your knee to the Father of Spirits, that this one thing may be granted you, that your souls may find at length the lively and mighty power of his Spirit upon yours, in the hearing of this gospel, that *you may be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit.*

2. Thus is the particular nature of that end expressed. And not to perplex you with various senses, the apostle intends, I conceive, no other than the dying to the world and sin, and living unto God, which is his main subject and scope in the foregoing discourse. That death was before called a *suffering in the flesh,* which is in effect the same; and therefore, though the words may be drawn another way, yet it is strange that interpreters have been so far wide of this their genuine and agreeable sense, and that they have been by almost all of them taken in some other import.

*To be judged in the flesh,* in the present sense, is to die to sin, or that sin die in us: and [1.] It is thus expressed suitably to the nature of it; it is to the flesh a violent death, and it is according to a sentence judicially pronounced against it. That guilty and miserable life of sin, is in the gospel adjudged to death: there that arrest and sentence is clear and full. See Rom. vi. 6, &c.; viii. 13. That sin must die in order that the soul may live: it must be crucified in us, and we to it, that we may partake of the life of Christ, and of happiness in him. And this is called *to be judged in the flesh,* to have this sentence executed. [2.] The thing is the rather spoken of here under the term of being judged, in counterbalance of that judgment mentioned immediately before, ver. 5, the last judgment of quick and dead, wherein they who would not be thus judged, but mocked and despised those that were, shall fall under a far more terrible judgment, and the sentence of a heavy death indeed, even everlasting death; though they think they shall escape and enjoy liberty in living in sin. And that *to be judged according to men,* is, I conceive, added, to signify the connaturalness of the life of sin to a man's now corrupt nature; that men do judge it a death indeed, to be severed and pulled from their sins, and that a cruel death; and the sentence of it in the gospel is a heavy sentence, *a hard saying* to a carnal heart, that he must give up all his sinful delights, must die indeed in self-denial, must be separated from himself, which is to die, if he will be joined with Christ, and live in him. Thus men judge that they are adjudged to a painful death by the sentence of the gospel. Although it is that they may truly and happily live, yet they understand it not so. They see the death, the parting with sin and all its pleasures; but the life they see not, nor can any know it till they partake of it: it is known to him in whom it exists; it is *hid with Christ in God.* Col. iii. 3. And therefore the opposition here is very fitly thus represented, that the death is *according to men in the flesh,* but the life is *according to God in the Spirit.*

* A. D. 1665.

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As the Christian is adjudged to this *death in the flesh* by the gospel, so he is looked on and accounted, by carnal men, as dead, for that he enjoys not with them what they esteem their life, and think they could not live without. One that can not carouse and swear with profane men, is a silly dead creature, good for nothing; and he that can bear wrongs, and love him that injured him, is a poor spiritless fool, hath no mettle or life in him, in the world's account. Thus is he *judged according to men in the flesh*,—he is as a dead man,—*but lives according to God in the Spirit;* dead to men, and alive to God, as ver. 2.

Now, if this life be in thee, it will act. All life is in motion, and is called *an act*, but most active of all is this most excellent, and, as I may call it, most lively life. It will be moving toward God, often seeking to him, making still toward him as its principle and fountain, exerting itself in holy and affectionate thoughts of him; sometimes on one of his sweet attributes, sometimes on another, as the bee among the flowers. And as it will thus act within, so it will be outwardly laying hold on all occasions, yea, seeking out ways and opportunities to be serviceable to thy Lord; employing all for him, commending and extolling his goodness, doing and suffering cheerfully for him, laying out the strength of desires, and parts, and means, in thy station, to gain him glory. If thou be alone, then not esteeming thyself alone, but with him, seeking to know more of him, and to be made more like him. If in company, then casting about how to bring his name into esteem, and to draw others to a love of religion and holiness by speeches, as it may be fit, and most by the true behavior of thy carriage;—tender over the souls of others, to do them good to thy utmost; thinking, each day, an hour lost when thou art not busy for the honor and advantage of him to whom thou now livest:—thinking in the morning, Now what may I do this day for my God? How may I most please and glorify him, and use my strength, and wit, and my whole self, as not mine, but his? And then, in the evening, reflecting, O Lord, have I seconded these thoughts in reality? What glory hast thou had by me this day? Whither went my thoughts and endeavors? What busied them most? Have I been much with God? Have I adorned the gospel in my converse with others?—And if thou findest anything done this way, this life will engage thee to bless and acknowledge him, the spring and worker of it. If thou hast stepped aside, were it but to *an appearance of evil*, or if any fit season of good hath escaped thee unprofitably, it will lead thee to check thyself, and to be grieved for thy sloth and coldness, and to see if more love would not beget more diligence.

Try it by sympathy and antipathy, which follow the nature of things: as we see in some plants and creatures that can not grow, can not agree together, and others that do favor and benefit mutually. If thy soul hath an aversion and reluctancy against whatever is contrary to holiness, it is an evidence of this new nature and life; thy heart rises against wicked ways and speeches, oaths and cursings, and rotten communication; yea, thou canst not endure unworthy discourses, wherein most spend their time; thou findest no relish in the unsavory societies of such as know not God, canst not *sit with vain persons*, but findest a delight in those who have the image of God upon them, such as partake of that divine life, and carry the evidences of it in their carriage. David did not disdain the fellowship of the saints, and that it was no disparagement to him, is implied in the name he gives them, Psalm xvi. 2, *the excellent ones*, the magnific or noble, *adiri:* that word is taken from one that signifies a robe or noble garment, *adereth, toga magnifica:* so he thought them nobles and kings as well as he; they had *robes royal*, and therefore were fit companions of kings. A spiritual eye looks upon spiritual dignity, and esteems and loves them who are *born of God*, how low soever be their natural birth and breeding. The sons of God have of his Spirit in them, and are born to the same inheritance, where all shall have enough, and they are tending homeward by the conduct of the same Spirit that is in them; so that there must be among them a real complacency and delight in one another.

And then, consider the temper of thy heart toward spiritual things, the word and ordinances of God, whether thou dost esteem highly of them, and delight in them; whether there be compliance of the heart with divine truths, something in thee, that suits and sides with them against thy corruptions; whether in thy affliction thou seekest not to the puddles of earthly comforts, but hast thy recourse to the sweet crystal streams of the divine promises, and findest refreshment in them. It may be, at some times, in a spiritual distemper, holy exercises and ordinances will not have that present sensible sweetness to a Christian, that he desires; and some will for a long time lie under dryness and deadness this way; yet there is here an evidence of this spiritual life, that thou stayest by the Lord, and reliest on him, and wilt not leave these holy means, how sapless soever to thy sense for the present. Thou findest for a long time little sweetness in prayer, yet thou prayest still, and, when thou canst say nothing, yet offerest at it, and lookest toward Christ thy life. Thou dost not turn away from these things to seek consolation elsewhere, but as thou knowest that life is in Christ, thou wilt stay till he refresh thee with new and lively influence. It is not any where but in him; as St. Peter said, *Lord, whither should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.* John vi. 68



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Consider with thyself, whether thou hast any knowledge of the growth of deficiencies of this spiritual life; for it is here but begun, and breathes in an air contrary to it, and lodges in a house that often smokes and darkens it. Canst thou go on in formal performances, from one year to another, and make no advancement in the inward exercises of grace, and restest thou content with that? It is no good sign. But art thou either gaining victories over sin, and further strength of faith and love, and other graces, or, at least, art thou earnestly seeking these, and bewailing thy wants and disappointments of this kind? Then thou livest. At the worst, wouldst thou rather grow this way, be farther off from sin, and nearer to God, than grow in thy estate, or credit or honors? Esteemest thou more highly of grace than of the whole world? There is life at the root; although thou findest not that flourishing thou desirest; yet, the desire of it is life in thee. And, if growing this way, art thou content, whatsoever is thy outward estate? Canst thou solace thyself in the love and goodness of thy God, though the world frown on thee? Art thou unable to take comfort in the smiles of the world, when his face is hid? This tells thee thou livest, and that he is thy life.

Although many Christians have not so much sensible joy, yet they account spiritual joy and the light of God's countenance the only true joy, and all other without it, madness; and they cry, and sigh, and wait for it. Meanwhile, not only duty and the hopes of attaining a better state in religion, but even love to God, makes them to do so, to serve, and please and glorify him to their utmost. And this is not a dead resting without God, but it is a stable compliance with his will in the highest point; waiting for him, and living by faith, which is most acceptable to him, In a word, whether in sensible comfort or without it, still, this is the tired thought of a believing soul, *It is good for me to draw nigh to God*, Psalm lxxiii. 28;—only good; and it will not live in a willing estrangedness from him, what way soever he be pleased to deal with it,

Now, for the entertaining and strengthening of this life, which is the great business and care of all that have it,—

1st. Beware of omitting and interrupting those spiritual means, which do provide it and nourish it. Little neglects of that kind will draw on greater, and great neglects will make great abatements of vigor and liveliness. Take heed of using holy things coldly and lazily, without affection: that will make them fruitless, and our life will not be advantaged by them, unless they be used in a lively way. Be active in all good within thy reach: as this is a sign of the spiritual life, so it is a helper and friend to it. A slothful, unstirring life, will make a sickly, unhealthy life. Motion purifies and sharpens the spirits, and makes men robust and vigorous.

2dly. Beware of admitting a correspondence with any sin; yea, do not so much as discourse familiarly with it, or look kindly toward it; for that will undoubtedly cast a damp upon thy spirit, and diminish thy graces at least, and will obstruct thy communion with God. Thou knowest (thou who hast any knowledge of this life) that thou canst not go to him with that sweet freedom thou wert wont, after thou hast been but tempering or parleying with any of thy old loves. Oh! do not make so foolish a bargain, as to prejudice the least of thy spiritual comforts, for the greatest and longest continued enjoyments of sin, which are base and but for a season.

But wouldst thou grow upward in this life? 3dly, Have much recourse to Jesus Christ thy head, the spring from whom flow are animal spirits that quicken thy soul. Wouldst thou know more of God? He it is who *reveals the Father*, and reveals him as *his Father*, and, in him, *thy Father;* and that is the sweet notion of God. Wouldst thou overcome thy lusts further. Our victory is in him. Apply his conquests: *We are more than conquerors, through him that loved us.* Rom. viii. 37. Wouldst thou be more replenished with graces and spiritual affections? His fulness is, for that use, open to us; there is life, and more life in him, and for us. This was his business here. He came, *that we might have life, and might have it more abundantly.* John x. 10.

VER. 7. But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

THE heart of a real Christian is really taken off from the world, and set heavenward; yet there is still in this flesh so much of the flesh hanging to it, as will readily poise all downward, unless it be often wound up and put in remembrance of those things that will raise it still to further spirituality. This the apostle doth in this epistle, and particularly in these words, in which three things are to be considered. I. A threefold duty recommended. II. The mutual relation that binds these duties to one another. III. That reason here used to bind them upon a Christian.

I. A threefold duty recommended, sobriety, watchfulness, and prayer; and of the three, the last is evidently the chief, and is here so meant, and others being recommended, as suitable and subservient to it; therefore I shall speak first of prayer.

And truly, to speak and to hear of this duty often, were our hearts truly and entirely acquainted with it, would have still new sweetness and usefulness in it. Oh, how great were the advantage of that lively knowledge of it, beyond the exactest skill in defining it, and in discoursing on the heads of doctrine concerning it!

Prayer is not a smooth expression, or a well-contrived form of words; not the product of a ready memory, or of a rich invention exerting itself in the performance. These may draw a neat picture of it, but still, the

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life is wanting. The motion of the heart God-ward, holy and divine affection, makes prayer real, and lively, and acceptable to the living God, to whom it is presented; the pouring out of thy heart to him who made it, and therefore hears it, and understands what it speaks, and how it is moved and affected in calling on him. It is not the gilded paper and good writing of a petition, that prevails with a king, but the moving sense of it. And to that king who discerns the heart, heart-sense is the sense of all, and that which only he regards; he listens to hear what that speaks, and takes all as nothing where that is silent. All other excellence in prayer is but the outside and fashion of it; this is the life of it.

Though prayer, precisely taken, is only petition, yet, in its fuller and usual sense, it comprehends the venting of our humble sense of vileness and sin, in sincere confession, and the extolling and praising of the holy name of our God, his excellency and goodness, with thankful acknowledgment of received mercies. Of these sweet ingredient perfumes is the incense of prayer composed, and by the Divine fire of love it ascend unto God, the heart and all with it; and when the hearts of the saints unite in joint prayer, the pillar of sweet smoke goes up the greater and the fuller. Thus says that song of the spouse: *Going up from the wilderness, as pillars of smoke perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, and all the powders of the merchant.* Cant. iii. 6. The word there (*Timeroth*, from *Temer*, a palm-tree), signifies *straight pillars*, like the tallest, straightest kind of trees. And, indeed, the sincerity and unfeignedness of prayer make it go up as a straight pillar, no crookedness in it, tending straight toward heaven, and bowing to no side by the way. Oh! the single and fixed viewing of God, as it, in other ways, is the thing which makes all holy and sweet, so particularly does it in this Divine work of prayer.

It is true we have to deal with a God who of himself needs not this our pains, either to inform or to excite him: he fully knows our thoughts before we express them, and our wants before we feel them or think of them. Nor doth this affection and gracious bent to do his children good, wax remiss, or admit of the least abatement and forgetfulness of them.

But, instead of necessity on the part of God, which can not be imagined, we shall find that equity, and that singular dignity and utility of it, on our part, which can not be denied.

1. *Equity.* That thus the creature signify his homage to, and dependance on, his Creator, for his being and well-being; that he take all the good he enjoys, or expects, from that Sovereign Good, declaring himself unworthy, waiting for all upon the terms of free goodness, and acknowledging all to flow from that spring.

2. *Dignity.* Man was made for communion with God his Maker; it is the excellency of his nature to be capable of this end, the happiness of it to be raised to enjoy it. Now, in nothing more in this life, is this communion actually and highly enjoyed, than in the exercise of prayer; in that he may freely impart his affairs, and estate, and wants, to God, as the most faithful and powerful friend, the richest and most loving father; may use the liberty of a child, telling his Father what he stands in need of and desires, and communing with him with humble confidence, being admitted so frequently into the presence of so great a King.

3. The *utility* of it. [1.] Prayer eases the soul in times of distress, when it is oppressed with griefs and fears, by giving them vent, and that in so advantageous a way, emptying them into the bosom of God. The very vent, were it but into the air, gives ease; or speak your grief to a statue rather than smother it; much more ease does it give to pour it forth into the lap of a confidential and sympathizing friend, even though unable to help us; yet still more, of one who can help; and, of all friends, our God is, beyond all comparison, the surest, and most affectionate, and most powerful. So Isa. lxiii. 9, both compassion and effectual salvation are expressed: *In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.* And so, resting on his love, power, and gracious promises, the soul quiets itself in God upon this assurance, that it is not in vain to seek him, and that he *despiseth not the sighing of the poor.* Psalm xii. 5.

[2.] The soul is more spiritually affected with its own condition, by laying it open before the Lord; becomes more deeply sensible of sin, and ashamed in his sight, in confessing it before him; more dilated and enlarged to receive the mercies sued for, as the *opening wide of the mouth* of the soul, that it *may be filled;* more disposed to observe the Lord in answering, and to bless him, and trust on him, upon the renewed experiences of his regard to its distresses and desires.

[3.] All the graces of the Spirit are, in prayer, stirred and exercised, and, by exercise, strengthened and increased; faith, in applying the Divine promises, which are the very ground that the soul goes upon to God, Hope looking out to their performance, and Love particularly expressing itself in that sweet converse, and delighting in it, as love doth in the company of the person beloved, thinking all hours too short in speaking with him. Oh, how the soul is refreshed with freedom of speech with its beloved Lord! And as it delights in that, so it is continually advanced and grows by each meeting and conference, beholding the excellency of God, and relishing the pure and sublime pleasures that are to be found in near communion with him. Looking upon the Father in the face

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of Christ, and using him as a mediator in prayer, as still it must, it is drawn to further admiration of that bottomless love, which found out that way of agreement, that *new and living way* of our access, when all was shut up, and we must otherwise have been shut out for ever. And then, the affectionate expressions of that reflex love, seeking to find that vent in prayer, do kindle higher, and being as it were fanned and blown up, rise to a greater, and higher, and purer flame, and so tend upward the more strongly. David, as he doth profess his love to God in prayer, in his Psalms, so no doubt it grew in the expressing; *I will love thee, O Lord my strength*, Psalm xviii. 1. And in Psalm cxvi. 1, he doth raise an incentive of love out of this very consideration of the correspondence of prayer—*I love the Lord because he hath heard;* and he resolves thereafter upon persistance in that course—*therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.* And as the graces of the Spirit are advanced in prayer by their actings, so for this further reason, because prayer sets the soul particularly near unto God in Jesus Christ. It is then in his presence, and being much with God in this way, it is powerfully assimilated to him by converse with him; as we readily contract their habits with whom we have much intercourse, especially if they be such as we singularly love and respect. Thus the soul is moulded further to the likeness of God, is stamped with clearer characters of him, by being much with him, becomes more like God, more holy and spiritual, and, like Moses, brings back a bright shining from the mount.

[4.] And not only thus, by a natural influence, doth prayer work this advantage, but even by a federal efficacy, suing for, and upon suit obtaining, supplies of grace as the chief good, and besides, all other needful mercies. It is a real means of receiving. *Whatsoever you shall ask, that will I do*, says our Savior. John xiv. 13. God having established this intercouse, has engaged his truth and goodness in it, that if they call on him, they shall be heard and answered. If they prepare the heart to call, he will incline his ear to hear. Our Savior hath assured us, that we may build upon his goodness, upon the affection of a father in him; *He will give good things to them that ask*, says one Evangelist (Matt. vii. 11), *give them the Holy Spirit to them that ask him*, says another (Luke xi. 13), as being *the good* indeed, the highest of gifts and the sum of all good things, and that for which his children are most earnest supplicants. Prayer for grace doth, as it were, set the mouth of the soul to the spring, draws from Jesus Christ, and is replenished out of his fulness, thirsting after it, and drawing from it that way.

And for this reason it is that our Savior, and from him, and according to his example, the apostle, recommend prayer so much. *Watch and pray*, says our Savior, Matt. xxvi. 41; and St. Paul, *Pray continually*, 1 Thess. v. 17. And our apostle here particularly specifies this, as the grand means of attaining that conformity with Christ which he presses: this is the highway to it, *Be sober and watch unto prayer.* He that is much in prayer, shall grow rich in grace. He shall thrive and increase most, who is busiest in this, which is our very traffic with heaven, and fetches the most precious commodities thence. He who sends oftenest out these ships of *desire*, who makes the most voyages to that land of spices and pearls, shall be sure to improve his stock most, and have most of heaven upon earth.

But the true art of this trading is very rare. Every trade hath something wherein the skill of it lies; but this is deep and supernatural, is not reached by human industry. Industry is to be used in it, but we must know the faculty of it comes from above, that spirit of prayer without which, learning, and wit, and religious breeding, can do nothing. Therefore, this is to be our prayer often, our great suit, for the spirit of prayer, that we may speak the language of the sons of God by the Spirit of God, which alone teaches the heart to pronounce aright those things that the tongue of many hypocrites can articulate well to man's ear. Only the children, in that right strain that takes him, call God their *Father*, and cry unto him as their Father; and therefore, many a poor unlettered Christian far outstrips your school-rabbies in this faculty, because it is not effectually taught in those lower academies. They must be in God's own school, children of his house, who speak this language. Men may give spiritual rules and directions in this, and such as may be useful, drawn from the word that furnishes us with all needful precepts; but you have still to bring these into the seat of this faculty of prayer, the heart, and stamp them upon it, and so to teach it to pray, without which there is no prayer. This is the prerogative royal of him who framed the heart of man within him.

But for advancing in this, and growing more skilful in it, prayer is, with continual dependance on the Spirit, to be much used. Praying much, thou shalt be blest with much faculty for it. So then, askest thou, What shall I do that I may learn to pray? There be things here to be considered, which are expressed as serving this end; but for the present take this, and chiefly this. By praying, thou shalt learn to pray.—Thou shalt both obtain more of the Spirit, and find more of the cheerful working of it in prayer, when thou puttest it often to that work for which it is received, and wherein it takes delight. And, as both advantaging all other graces and promoting the grace of prayer itself, this frequency and abounding in prayer is here very clearly intended, in that the apostle makes it as he main of the work we have to

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do, and would have us keep our hearts in a constant aptness for it: *Be sober and watch* —to what end?—*unto prayer.*

*Be sober.*] They that have no better, must make the best they can of carnal delights. It is no wonder they take as large a share of them as they can bear, and sometimes more. But the Christian is called to a more excellent state and higher pleasures; so that he may behold men glutting themselves with these base things, and be as little moved to share with them, as men are taken with the pleasure a swine hath in wallowing in the mire.

It becomes the heirs of heaven to be far above the love of the earth, and in the necessary use of any earthly things, still to keep within the due measure of their use, and to keep their hearts wholly disengaged from an excessive affection to them. This is the sobriety to which we are here exhorted.

It is true, that in the most common sense of the word, it is very commendable, and it is fit to be so considered by a Christian, that he flee gross intemperance, as a thing most contrary to his condition and holy calling, and wholly inconsistent with the spiritual temper of a renewed mind, with those exercises to which it is called, and with its progress in its way homeward. It is a most unseemly sight, to behold one simply by outward profession a Christian, overtaken with surfeiting and drunkenness, much more, given to the vile custom of it. All sensual delights, even the filthy lust of uncleanness, go under the common name of insobriety, intemperance, ἀσωλγεία: and they all degrade and destroy the noble soul, being unworthy of a man, much more of a Christian; and the contempt of them preserves the soul and elevates it.

But the sobriety here recommended, though it takes in that too, yet reaches farther than temperance in meat and drink. It is the spiritual temperance of a Christian mind in all earthly things, as our Savior joins these together, Luke xxi. 34, *surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life:* and under the *cares* are comprehended all the excessive desires and delights of this life, which can not be followed and attended without distempered carefulness.

Many who are sober men and of temperate diet, yet are spiritually intemperate, drunk with pride, or covetousness, or passions; drunk with self-love and love of their pleasures and ease, with love of the world and the things of it, which can not consist with the love of God, as St. John tells us, 1 John ii. 15; drunk with the inordinate, unlawful love even of their lawful calling and the lawful gain they pursue by it. Their hearts are still going after it, and so, reeling to and fro, never fixed on God and heavenly things, but either hurried up and down with incessant business, or, if sometimes at ease, it is as the ease of a drunken man, not composed to better and wiser thoughts, but falling into a dead sleep, contrary to the watching here joined with sobriety.

*Watch.*] There is a Christian rule to be observed in the very moderating of bodily sleep, and that particularly for the interest of prayer; but watching, as well as sobriety, here, implies chiefly the spiritual circumspectness and vigilancy of the mind, in a wary, waking posture, that it be not surprised by the assaults or sleights of Satan, by the world, nor by its nearest and most deceiving enemy, the corruption that dwells within, which being so near, doth most readily watch unperceived advantages, and easily circumvent us. Heb. xii. 1. The soul of a Christian being surrounded with enemies, both of so great power and wrath, and so watchful to undo it, should it not be watchful for its own safety, and live in a military vigilancy continually, keeping constant watch and sentinel, and suffering nothing to pass that may carry the least suspicion of danger? Should he not be distrustful and jealous of all the motions of his own heart, and the smilings of the world? And in relation to these, it will be a wise course to take that word as a good caveat, Νῆφε καὶ μίμνησο ἀπιστεῖν. *Be watchful, and remember to mistrust.* Under the garment of some harmless pleasure, or some lawful liberties, may be conveyed into thy soul some thief or traitor, that will either betray thee to the enemy, or at least pilfer and steal of the most precious things thou hast. Do we not by experience find, how easily our foolish hearts are seduced and deceived, and therefore apt to deceive themselves? And by things that seem to have no evil in them, they are yet drawn from the height of affection to their Supreme Good, and from communion with God, and study to please him; which should not be intermitted, for then it will abate, whereas it ought still to be growing.

Now, II. The *mutual relation* of these duties is clear: they are each of them assistant and helpful to the other, and are in their nature inseparably linked together, as they are here in the words of the apostle; *sobriety*, the friend of *watchfulness*, and *prayer*, of both. Intemperance doth of necessity draw on sleep; excessive eating and drinking, by sending up too many, and so, gross vapors, surcharge the brain; and when the body is thus deadened, how unfit is it for any active employment. Thus the mind, by a surcharge of delights, or desires, or cares of earth, is made so heavy and dull, that it can not awake; hath not the spiritual activity and clearness that spiritual exercises, particularly prayer, do require. Yea, as bodily insobriety, full feeding and drinking, not only for the time indisposes to action, but, by the custom of it, brings the body to so gross and heavy a temper, that the very natural spirits can not stir to and fro in it with freedom, but are clogged, and stick as the wheels of a coach in a deep miry way; thus is it with the soul glutted with earthly things: the affections

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bemired with them, make it sluggish and inactive in spiritual things, and render the motions of the spirit heavy; and, obstructed thus, the soul grows carnally secure and sleepy, and prayer comes heavily off. But when the affections are soberly exercised, and even in lawful things have not full liberty, with the reins laid on their necks, to follow the world and carnal projects and delights: when the unavoidable affairs of this life are done with a spiritual mind, a heart kept free and disengaged; then is the soul more nimble for spiritual things, for Divine meditation and prayer: it can watch and continue in these things, and spend itself in that excellent way with more alacrity.

Again, as this sobriety, and the watchful temper attending it, enable for prayer, so prayer preserves these. Prayer winds up the soul from the earth, raises it above those things which intemperance feeds on, acquaints it with the transcending sweetness of Divine comforts, the love and loveliness of Jesus Christ; and these most powerfully wean the soul from the low creeping pleasures that the world gapes after and swallows with such greediness. He that is admitted to nearest intimacy with the king, and is called daily to his presence, not only in the view and company of others, but likewise in secret, will he be so mad as to sit down and drink with the kitchen-boys, or the common guards, so far below what he may enjoy? Surely not.

Prayer, being our near communion with the great God, certainly sublimates the soul, and makes it look down upon the base ways of the world with disdain, and despise the truly besotting pleasures of it. Yea, the Lord doth sometimes fill those souls that converse much with him, with such beatific delights, such inebriating sweetness, as I may call it, that it is, in a happy manner, drunk with these; and the more there is of this, the more is the soul above base intemperance in the use of the delights of the world. Whereas common drunkenness makes a man less than a man, this makes him more than a man: that sinks him below himself, makes him a beast; this raises him above himself, and makes him an angel.

Would you, as surely you ought, have much faculty for prayer, and be frequent in it, and experience much of the pure sweetness of it? Then deny yourselves more the muddy pleasures and sweetness of the world. If you would pray much, and with much advantage, then *be sober, and watch unto prayer.* Suffer not your hearts to long so after ease, and wealth, and esteem in the world: these will make your hearts, if they mix with them, become like them, and take their quality; will make them gross and earthly, and unable to mount up: will clog the wings of prayer, and you shall find the loss, when your soul is heavy and drowsy, and falls off from delighting in God and communion with him. Will such things as those you follow be able to counter vail your damage? Can they speak you peace, and uphold you in a day of darkness and distress? Or may it not be such now, as will make them all a burden and vexation to you? But, on the other hand, the more you abate and let go of these, and come empty and hungry to God in prayer, the more room shall you have for his consolations; and therefore, the more plentifully will he pour in of them, and enrich your soul with them the more, the less you take in of the other.

Again, would you have yourselves raised to, and continued and advanced in, a spiritual heavenly temper, free from the surfeits of earth, and awake and active for heaven? Be incessant in prayer.

But thou wilt say, "I find nothing but heavy indisposedness in it, nothing but roving and vanity of heart, and so, though I have used it some time, it is still unprofitable and uncomfortable to me." Although it be so, yet hold on, give it not over. Or need I say this to thee? Though it were referred to thyself, wouldst thou forsake it and leave off? Then, what wouldst thou do next? For if there be no comfort in it, far less is there any for thee in any other way. If temptation should so far prevail with thee as to lead thee to try intermission, either thou wouldst be forced to return to it presently, or certainly wouldst fall into a more grievous condition, and, after horrors and lashings, must at length come back to it again, or perish for ever. Therefore, however it go, continue praying. Strive to believe that love thou canst not see; for where sight is abridged, there it is proper for faith to work. If thou canst do no more, lie before thy Lord, and look to him, and say, "Lord, here I am, thou mayest quicken and revive me if thou wilt, and I trust thou wilt; but if I must do it, I will die at thy feet. My life is in thy hand, and thou art goodness and mercy: while I have breath I will cry, or, if I can not cry, yet I will wait on, and look to thee."

One thing forget not, that the ready way to rise out of this sad, yet safe state, is, to be much in viewing the Mediator, and interposing him between the Father's view and thy soul. Some who do orthodoxly believe this to be right, yet (as often befalls us in other things of this kind), do not so consider and use it in their necessity, as becomes them, and therefore fall short of comfort. He hath declared it. *No man cometh to the Father but by me.* How vile soever thou art, put thyself under his robe, and into his hand, and he will lead thee unto the Father, and present thee acceptable and blameless; and the Father shall receive thee, and declare himself well pleased with thee in his well-beloved Son, who hath covered thee with his righteousness, and brought thee so clothed, and set thee before him.

III. The third thing we have to consider is, the reason which binds on us these duties: ***The end of all things is at hand.***

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We need often to be reminded of this, for even believers too readily forget it: and it is very suitable to the apostle's foregoing discourse of judgment, and to his present exhortation to sobriety and watchfulness unto prayer. Even the general end of all is *at hand;* though, since the apostle wrote this, many ages are past. For, [1.] The apostles usually speak of the whole time after the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh, as *the last time*, for that two double chiliads of years passed before it, the one before, the other under the law; and in this third, it is conceived, shall be the end of all things. And the apostles seem, by divers expressions, to have apprehended it in their days to be not far off. So, St. Paul, 1 Thess. iv. 17: *We which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds*—speaking as if it were not impossible that it might come in their time; which put him upon some explication of that correction of their mistakes, in his next epistle to them, wherein, notwithstanding, he seems not to assert any great tract of time to intervene, but only that in that time great things were first to come. [2.] However, this might always have been said: in respect of succeeding eternity, the whole duration of the world is not considerable; and to the eternal Lord who made it, and hath appointed its period, *a thousand years are but as one day.* We think a thousand years a great matter, in respect of our short life, and more so through our shortsightedness, who look not through this to eternal life; but what is the utmost length of time, were it millions of years, to a thought of eternity? We find much room in this earth, but to the vast heavens, it is but as a point. Thus, that which is but small to us, a field or little enclosure, a fly, had it skill, would divide into provinces in proportion to itself. [3.] To each man, the *end of all things* is even after our measure, *at hand;* for when he dies, the world ends for him. Now this consideration fits the subject, and presses it strongly. Seeing all things shall be quickly at an end, even the frame of heaven and earth, why should we, knowing this, and having higher hopes, lay out so much of our desires and endeavors upon those things that are posting to ruin? It is no hard notion, to be sober and watchful to prayer, to be trading that way, and seeking higher things, and to be very moderate in these, which are of so short a date. As in themselves and their utmost term, they are of short duration, so more evidently to each of us in particular, who are *so soon cut off, and flee away.* Why should our hearts cleave to those things from which we shall so quickly part, and from which, if we will not freely part and let them go, we shall be pulled away, and pulled with the more pain, the closer we cleave, and the faster we are glued to them?

This the Apostle St. Paul casts in seasonably (though many think it not seasonable at such times), when he is discoursing of a great point of our life, marriage, to work Christian minds to a holy freedom both ways, whether they use it or not; not to view it, nor anything here, with the world's spectacles, which make it look so big and so fixed, but to see it in the stream of time as passing by, and as no such great matter. 1 Cor. vii. 31: *The fashion of this world passeth away* παράγει, as a pageant or show in a street, going through and quickly out of sight. What became of all the marriage solemnities of kings and princes of former ages, which they were so taken up with in their time? When we read of them described in history, they are as a night-dream, or a day-fancy, which passes through the mind and vanishes.

Oh! foolish man, that hunteth such poor things, and will not be called off till death benight him, and he finds his great work not done, yea, not begun, nor even seriously thought of. Your buildings, your trading, your lands, your matches, and friendships and projects, when they take with you, and your hearts are after them, say, But for how long are all these? *Their end is at hand: therefore be sober, and watch unto prayer.* Learn to divide better: more hours for prayer, and fewer for them; your whole heart for it, and none of it for them. Seeing they will fail you so quickly, prevent them; become free: lean not on them till they break, and you fall into the pit.

It is reported of one, that, hearing the fifth chapter of Genesis read, so long lives, and yet, the burden still, *they died*—Seth lived nine hundred and twelve years, *and he died*, Enos lived nine hundred and five years, *and he died;* Methuselah nine hundred and sixty-nine years, *and he died;*—he took so deeply the thought of death and eternity, that it changed his whole frame, and turned him from a voluptuous, to a most strict and pious course of life. How small a word will do much, when God sets it into the heart! But surely, this one thing would make the soul more calm and sober in the pursuit of present things, if their term were truly computed and considered. How soon shall youth, and health, and carnal delights, be at an end! How soon shall state-craft, and king-craft, and all the great projects of the highest wits and spirits, be laid in the dust! This casts a damp upon all those fine things. But to a soul acquainted with God, and in affection removed hence already, no thought so sweet as this. It helps much to carry it cheerfully through wrestlings and difficulties, through better and worse; they see land near, and shall quickly be at home: that is the way. *The end of all things is at hand;* an end of a few poor delights and the many vexations of this wretched life; an end of temptations and sins, the worst of all evils; yea, an end of the imperfect fashion of our best things here, an end of prayer itself, to which succeeds that new song of endless praise.

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VER. 8. And, above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

THE graces of the Spirit are an entire frame, making up the new creation, and none of them can be wanting; therefore the doctrine and exhortation of the apostles speak of them usually, not only as inseparable, but as one. But there is, among them all, none more comprehensive than this of *love*, insomuch that St. Paul calls it *the fulfilling of the law*, Rom. xiii. 10. Love to God is the sum of all relative to him, and so likewise is it toward our brethren. Love to God is that which makes us live to him, and be wholly his; that which most powerfully weans us from this world, and causeth us delight in communion with him in holy meditation and prayer. Now the apostle adding here the duty of Christians to one another, gives this as the prime, yea, the sum of all: *Above all, have fervent love.*

Concerning this, consider, I. The nature of it. II. The eminent degree of it. And, III. The excellent fruit of it.

I. The nature of this love. 1. It is a union, therefore called a *bond* or *chain*, that links things together. 2. It is not a mere external union, that holds in customs, or words, or outward carriage, but a union of hearts. 3. It is here not a natural, but a spiritual, supernatural union: it is the mutual love of Christians *as brethren*. There is a common benevolence and good will due to all; but a more particular uniting affection amongst Christians, which makes them interchangeably one.

The devil being an apostate spirit, revolted and separated from God, doth naturally project and work division. This was his first exploit, and it is still his grand design and business in the world. He first divided man from God: put them at an enmity by the first sin of our first parents; and the next we read of in their first child, was enmity against his brother. So, Satan is called by our Savior, justly, *a liar and a murderer from the beginning*, John viii. 44: he murdered man by lying, and made him a murderer.

And as the devil's work is division, Christ's work is union. He came to *dissolve the works of the devil*, ἵνα λύσῃ, by a contrary work, 1 John iii. 8. He came to make all friends; to recollect and reunite all men to God, and man to man. And both those unions hold in him by virtue of that marvellous union of natures in his person, and that mysterious union of the persons of believers with him as their head. So the word, ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι, signifies, Eph. i. 10, *To unite all in one head.*

This was his great project in all; this he died and suffered for, and this he prayed for, John xvii.; and this is strong above all ties, natural or civil, union in Christ. This they have who are indeed Christians; this they would pretend to have, if they understood it, who profess themselves Christians. If natural friendship be capable of that expression, *one spirit in two bodies*, Christian union hath it much more really and properly; for there is, indeed, one spirit more extensive in all the faithful, yea, so one a spirit, that it makes them up into *one body* more extensive. They are not so much as divers bodies, only divers *members of one body.*

Now, this love of our brethren is not another from the love of God; it is but the streaming forth of it, or the reflection of it. Jesus Christ sending his spirit into the heart, unites it to God, in himself by love, which is indeed all, that *loving of God* supremely and entirely, with *all the mind and soul, all the* combined *strength of the heart!* And then, that same love, first wholly carried to him, is not divided or impaired by the love of our brethren, but is dilated, as derived from the other. God allows, yea, commands, yea, causes, that it stream forth, and act itself toward them, remaining still in him, as in its source and centre; beginning at him, and returning to him, as the beams that diffuse themselves from the sun, and the light and heat, yet are not divided or cut off from it, but remain in it, and, by emanation, issue from it. In loving our brethren in God, and for him, not only because he commands us to love them, and so the law of love to him ties us to it, as his will; but because that love of God doth naturally extend itself thus, and act thus; in loving our brethren after a spiritual, Christian manner, we do, even in that, love our God.

Loving of God makes us one with God, and so gives us an impression of his Divine bounty in his Spirit. And his love, the proper work of his Spirit, dwelling in the heart, enlarges and dilates it, as self-love contracts and straitens it; so that as self-love is the perfect opposite to the love of God, it is likewise so to brotherly love; it shuts out and undoes both; and where the love of God is rekindled and enters the heart, it destroys and burns up self-love, and so carries the affection up to himself, and in him forth to our brethren.

This is that bitter root of all enmity in man against God, and, among men, against one another, *self*, man's heart turned from God toward himself; and the very work of renewing grace is, to annul and destroy self, to replace God in his right, that the heart, and all its affections and motions, may be at his disposal; so that, instead of self-will and self-love, which ruled before, now, the will of God, and the love of God, command all.

And where it is thus, there this φιλαδελφία, this love of our brethren, will be sincere. Whence is it that wars, and contests, and mutual disgracings and despisings, do so much abound, but that men love themselves, and nothing but themselves, or in relation to themselves, as it pleases, or is advantageous to them? That is the standard and rule. All is carried by interest, so thence are strifes, and defamings, and bitterness against one another. But the Spirit of Christ coming in,

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undoes all selfishness. And now, what is according to God, what he wills and loves, that is law, and a powerful law, so written on the heart, this law of love, that it obeys, not unpleasantly, but with delight, and knows no constraint but the sweet constraint of love. To forgive a wrong, to love even thine enemy for him, is not only feasible now, but delectable, although a little while ago thou thoughtest it was quite impossible.

That Spirit of Christ, which is all sweetness and love, so calms and composes the heart, that peace with God, and that unspeakably blessed correspondence of love with him, do so fill the soul with lovingness and sweetness, that it can breathe nothing else. It hates nothing but sin, it pities the sinner, and carries toward the worst that love of good will, desiring their return and salvation. But as for those in whom appears the image of their Father, their heart cleaves to them as brethren indeed. No natural advantages of birth, of beauty, or of wit, draw a Christian's love so much, as the resemblance of Christ; wherever that is found, it is comely and lovely to a soul that loves him.

Much communion with God sweetens and calms the mind, cures the distempers of passion and pride, which are the avowed enemies of love. Particularly, prayer and love suit well.

(1.) Prayer disposes to this love. *He that loveth not, knoweth not God*, saith the beloved apostle, *for God is love.* 1 John iv. 3. He that is most conversant with love in the spring of it, where it is purest and fullest, can not but have the fullest measure of it, flowing in thence into his heart, and flowing forth thence unto his brethren. If they who use the society of mild and good men, are insensibly assimilated to them, grow like them, and contract somewhat of their temper; much more doth familiar walking with God powerfully transform the soul into this likeness, making it merciful, and loving, and ready to forgive, as he is.

(2.) This love disposes to prayer. To pray together, hearts must be consorted and tuned together; otherwise, how can they sound the same suits harmoniously? How unpleasant, in the exquisite ear of God, who made the ear, are the jarring, disunited hearts that often seem to join in the same prayer, and yet are not set together in love! And when thou prayest alone, while thy heart is imbittered and disaffected to thy brother, although upon an offence done to thee, it is as a mistuned instrument; the strings are not accorded, are not in tune among themselves, and so the sound is harsh and offensive. Try it well thyself, and thou wilt perceive it; how much more he to whom thou prayest! When thou art stirred and in passion against thy brother, or not, on the contrary, lovingly affected toward him, what broken, disordered, unfastened stuff are thy requests! Therefore the Lord will have this done first, the heart tuned: *Go thy way*, says he, *leave thy gift, and be reconciled to thy brother; then come and offer thy gift.* Matt. v. 23.

Why is this which is so much recommended by Christ, so little regarded by Christians? It is given by him as the characteristic and badge of his followers; yet, of those who pretend to be so, how few wear it! Oh! a little real Christianity were more worth than all that empty profession and discourse, that we think so much of. Hearts receiving the mould and stamp of this rule, these were living copies of the gospel. *Ye are our epistle*, says the apostle, 2 Cor. iii. 2. We come together, and hear, and speak, sometimes of one grace, and sometimes of another, while yet the most never seek to have their hearts enriched with the possession of any one of them. We search not to the bottom the perverseness of our nature, and the guiltiness that is upon us in these things; or we shift off the conviction, and find a way to forget it when the hour is done.

That accursed root, self-love, which makes man an enemy to God, and men enemies and devourers one of another, who sets to the discovery and the displanting of it? Who bends the force of holy endeavors and prayer, supplicating the hand of God for the plucking of it up? Some natures are quieter and make less noise, but till the heart be possessed with the love of God, it shall never truly love either men in the way due to all, or the children of God in their peculiar relation.

*Among yourselves*, &c.] That is here the point: the peculiar love of the saints as thy brethren, glorying and rejoicing in the same Father, the sons of God *begotten again* to that *lively hope* of glory. Now these, as they owe a bountiful disposition to all, are mutually to love one another as brethren.

Thou that hatest and reproachest the godly, and the more they study to walk as the children of their holy Father, hatest them the more, and art glad to find a spot on them to point at, or wilt dash mire on them where thou findest none, know that thou art in this the enemy of God; know that the indignity done to them, Jesus Christ will take as done to himself. Truly, *we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother, abideth in death.* 1 John iii. 4. So then, renounce this word, or else believe that thou art yet far from the life of Christ, who so hatest it in others. Oh! but they are but a number of hypocrites wilt thou say. If they be so, this declares so much the more thy extreme hatred of holiness, that thou canst not endure so much as the picture of it; canst not see anything like it, but thou must let fly at it. And this argues thy deep hatred of God. Holiness in a Christian is the image of God, and the hypocrite, in the resemblance of it, is the image of a Christian; so that thou hatest the very image of the image of God. For, deceive not thyself, it is not the latent evil in hypocrisy, but the apparent good in it



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that thou hatest. The profane man thinks himself a great zealot against hypocrisy; he is still exclaiming against it; but it is only this he is angry at, that all should not be ungodly, the wicked enemies of religion, as he is, either dissolute, or merely decent. And the decent man is frequently the bitterest enemy of all strictness beyond his own size, as condemning him, and therefore he cries it down, as all of it false and counterfeit wares.

Let me entreat you, if you would not be found *fighters against God*, let no revilings be heard among you, against any who are, or seem to be, followers of holiness. If you will not reverence it yourselves, yet reverence it in others; at least, do not reproach it. It should be your ambition, else, why are you willing to be called Christians? But if you will not *pursue holiness*, yet persecute it not. If you will not *have fervent love to the saints*, yet burn not with infernal heat of fervent hatred against them; for truly, that is one of the most likely pledges of those flames, and of society with damned spirits, as love to the children of God is, of that inheritance and society with them in glory.

You that are brethren, and united by that purest and strongest tie, as you are one in your Head, in your life derived from him, in your hopes of glory with him, seek to be more one in heart, in fervent love one to another in him. Consider the combinations and concurrences of the wicked against him and his *little flock*, and let this provoke you to more united affection. Shall the scales of Leviathan (as one alludes) stick so close together, and shall not the members of Christ be more one and undivided? You that can feel it, stir up yourselves to bewail the present divisions, and the fears of more. Sue earnestly for that *one Spirit*, to act and work more powerfully in the hearts of his people.

II. Consider the eminent degree of this love. 1. Its eminency among the graces, *above all*. 2. The high measure of it required, *fervent love* [εκτενη], a high bent, or strain of it; that which acts strongly, and carries far.

1. It is eminent, that which indeed among Christians preserves all, and knits all together, and therefore called, Colos. iii. 14, *the bond of perfection:* all is bound up by it. How can they pray together, how advance the name of their God, or keep in and stir up all grace in one another, unless they be united in love? How can they have access to God, or fellowship with him *who is love*, as St John speaks, if, instead of this sweet temper, there be rancor and bitterness among them? So then, uncharitableness and divisions among Christians, do not only hinder their civil good, but their spiritual much more; and that not only *lucro cessante* (as they speak), interrupting the ways of mutual profiting, but *damno emergente*, it doth really damage them, and brings them to losses; preys upon their graces, as hot withering winds on herbs and plants. Where the heart entertains either bitter malice, or but uncharitable prejudices, there will be a certain decay of spirituality in the whole soul.

2. Again, for the *degree* of this love required, it is not a cold indifferency, a negative love, as I may call it, or a not willing of evil, nor is it a lukewarm wishing of good, but fervent and active love: for, if fervent, it will be active, a fire that will not be smothered, but will find a way to extend itself.

III. The fruits of this love follow. 1. *Covering of evil*, in this verse. 2. *Doing of good*, ver. 9, &c.

*Charity shall cover the multitude of sins.*] This expression is taken from Solomon, Prov x. 12; and as covering sins is represented as a main act of love, so love is commended by it, this being a most useful and laudable act of it, that it *covers sins*, and *a multitude of sins*. Solomon saith (and the opposition clears the sense), *Hatred stirreth up strife*, aggravates and makes the worst of all, *but love covereth all sins:* it delights not in the undue disclosing of brethren's failings, doth not eye them rigidly, nor expose them willingly to the eyes of others.

Now this recommends charity, in regard of its continual usefulness and necessity this way, considering human frailty, and that *in many things*, as St. James speaks, *we all offend*, James iii. 2; so that this is still needful on all hands. What do they think who are still picking at every appearing infirmity of their brethren? Know they not that the frailties that cleave to the saints of God while they are here, do stand in need of, and call for, this mutual office of love, to cover and pass them by? Who is there that stands not in need of this? If none, why are there any who deny it to others? There can be no society nor entertaining of Christian converse without it, without giving (as we speak) allowance; reckoning to meet with defects and weaknesses on all hands, and covering the failings of one another, seeing it is mutually needful.

Again, as the necessity of this commends it and the love whence it flows, so there is that laudable ingenuousness in it that should draw us to the liking of it. It is the bent of the basest and most worthless spirits, to be busy in the search and discovery of others' failings, passing by all that is commendable and imitable, as base flies readily sitting on any little sore they can find, rather than upon the sound parts. But the more excellent mind of a real Christian loves not unnecessarily to touch, no, nor to look upon them, but rather turns away. Such never uncover their brother's sores, but to cure them; and no more than is necessary for that end: they would willingly have them hid, that neither they nor others might see them.

This bars not the judicial trial of scandalous offences, nor the giving information of them, and bringing them under due censure. The forbearing of this is not charity, but both

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iniquity and cruelty; and this cleaves too much to many of us. They that can not pass over the least touch of a wrong done to themselves, can digest twenty high injuries done to God by profane persons about them, and resent it not. Such may be assured that they are as yet destitute of love to God, and of Christian love to their brethren, which springs from it.

The uncovering of sin, necessary to the curing of it, is not only no breach of charity, but is indeed a main point of it, and the neglect of it the highest kind of cruelty. But further than that goes, certainly, this rule teaches the veiling of our brethren's infirmities from the eyes of others, and even from our own, that we look not on them with rigor; no, nor without compassion.

1. Love is skilful in finding out the fairest construction of things doubtful; and this is a great point. Take me the best action that can be named, pride and malice shall find a way to disgrace it, and put a hard visage upon it. Again, what is not undeniably evil, love will turn it in all the ways of viewing it, till it find the best and most favorable.

2. Where the thing is so plainly a sin, that this way of covering it can have no place, yet then will love consider what may lessen it most; whether a surprise, or strength of temptation, or ignorance (as our Savior, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*), or natural complexion, or at least will still take in human frailty, to turn all the bitterness of passion into sweet compassion.

3. All private reproofs, and where conscience requires public accusation and censure, even these will be sweetened in that compassion that flows from love. If it be such a sore as must not lie covered up, lest it prove deadly, so that it must be uncovered, to be lanced and cut, that it may be cured, still this is to be done as loving the soul of the brother. Where the rule of conscience urges it not, then thou must bury it, and be so far from delighting to divulge such things, that, as far as without partaking in it, thou mayest, thou must veil it from all eyes, and try the way of private admonition; and if the party appear to be humble and willing to be reclaimed, then forget it, cast it quite out of thy thoughts, that, as much as may be, thou mayest learn to forget it more. But this, I say, is to be done with the tenderest bowels of piety, feeling the cuts thou art forced to give in that necessary incision, and using mildness and patience. Thus the apostle instructs his Timothy: *Reprove, rebuke, exhort*, but do it with *long-suffering, with all long-suffering*. 2 Tim. iv. 2. And even *them that oppose, instruct*, says he, *with meekness, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth*. 2 Timothy ii. 25.

4. If thou be interested in the offence, even by unfeigned free forgiveness, so far as thy concern goes, let it be as if it had not been. And though thou meet with many of these, charity will gain and grow by such occasions, and the more it hath covered, the more it can cover: *cover a multitude*, says our apostle, *covers all sins*, says Solomon. Yea, though thou be often put to it by the same party, what made thee forgive once, well improved, will stretch our Savior's rule to *seventy times seven times in one day*. Matt. xviii. 21.

And truly in this men mistake grossly who think it is greatness of spirit to resent wrongs, and baseness to forgive them: on the contrary, it is the only excellent spirit scarcely to feel a wrong, or, feeling, straightly to forgive it. It is the greatest and best of spirits that enables to this, the Spirit of God, that dove-like Spirit which rested on our Lord Jesus, and which from him is derived to all that are in him. I pray you, think, is it not a token of a tender and sickly body, to be altered with every touch from every blast it meets with? And thus is it a sign of a poor, weak, sickly spirit, to endure nothing, to be distempered at the least air of an injury, yea, with the very fancy of it, where there is really none.

*Inf.* 1. Learn then to beware of those evils that are contrary to this charity. Do not dispute with yourselves in rigid remarks and censures, when the matter will bear any better sense.

2dly. Do not delight in tearing a wound wider, and stretching a real failing to the utmost.

3dly. In handling of it, study gentleness, pity, and meekness. These will advance the cure, whereas the flying out into passion against thy fallen brother, will prove nothing but as the putting of thy nail into the sore, that will readily rankle it and make it worse. Even sin may be sinfully reproved: and how thinkest thou that sin shall redress sin, and restore the sinner?

There is a great deal of spiritual art and skill in dealing with another's sin: it requires much spirituality of mind, and much prudence, and much love, a mind clear from passion; for that blinds the eye, and makes the hand rough, so that a man neither rightly sees, nor rightly handles the sore he goes about to cure; and many are lost through the ignorance and neglect of that due temper which is to be brought to this work. Men think otherwise, that their rigors are much spirituality; but they mistake it. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted*. Gal. vi. 1.

4thly. For thyself, as an offence touches thee, learn to delight as much in that Divine way of forgiveness, as carnal minds do in that base, inhuman way of revenge. It is not, as they judge, a glory to bluster and swagger for everything, but the *glory of a man to pass by a transgression*. Prov. xix. 11. This makes him Godlike. And consider thou often that

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love which covers all thine, that blood which was shed to wash off thy guilt. Needs any more be said to gain all in this that can be required of thee?

Now, the other fruit of love, *doing good*, is first expressed in one particular, verse 9, and then dilated to a general rule, at verse 20.

VER. 9. Use hospitality one to another, without grudging.

HOSPITALITY, or kindness to strangers, is mentioned here as an important fruit of love, it being, in those times and places, in much use in travel, and particularly needful often among Christians one to another then, by reason of hot and general persecutions. But under this name, I conceive all other supply of the wants of our brethren in outward things to be here comprehended.

Now, for this, the way and measure indeed must receive its proportion from the estate and ability of persons. But certainly, the great straitening of hands in these things, is more from the straitness of hearts, than of means. A large heart, with a little estate, will do much with cheerfulness and little noise, while hearts glued to the poor riches they possess, or rather are possessed by, can scarcely part with anything till they be pulled from all.

Now, for the supplying of our brethren's necessities, one good help is, the retrenching of our own superfluities. Turn the stream into that channel where it will refresh thy brethren and enrich thyself, and let it not run into the dead sea. Thy vain excessive entertainments, the gaudy variety of dresses, these thou dost not challenge, thinking it is of thine own; but know (as it follows, ver. 10), thou art but *steward* of it, and this is not faithfully laying out; thou canst not answer for it. Yea, it is robbery; thou robbest thy poor brethren who want necessaries, while thou lavishest thus on unnecessaries. Such a feast, such a suit of apparel, is direct robbery in the Lord's eye; and the poor may cry, "That is mine that you cast away so vainly, by which both I and you might be profited." *Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thy hand to do it.* Proverbs iii. 27, 28.

*Without grudging.*] Some look to the actions, but few to the intention and posture of mind in them; and yet that is the main: it is all, indeed, even with men, so far as they can perceive it, much more with thy Lord, who always perceives it to the full. He delights in the good he does his creatures, and would have them be so affected to one another; especially he would have his children bear this trait of his likeness. See, then, when thou givest alms, or entertainest a stranger, that there be nothing either of under-grumbling, or crooked self-seeking in it. Let the *left hand* have no hand in it, nor so much as *know* of it, as our Savior directs, Matt. vi. 3. Let it not be to please men, or to please thyself, or simply out of a natural pity, or from the consideration of thy own possible incidency into the like case, which many think very well, if they be so moved; but here is a higher principle moving thee, love to God, and to thy brother in and for him. This will make it cheerful and pleasant to thyself, and well-pleasing to Him for whom thou dost it. We lose much in actions, in themselves good, both of piety and charity, through disregard of our hearts in them; and nothing will prevail with us to be more intent this way, to look more on our hearts, but this, to look more on him who looks on them, and judges, and accepts all according to them.

Though all the sins of former ages gather and fall into the latter times, this is pointed out as the grand evil, *uncharitableness*. The Apostle St. Paul tells us, 2 Tim. iii. 2, that *in the last days men shall be covetous, slanderous, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God*—but how? Whence all this confluence of evils? The spring of all is put first, and that is the direct opposite of Christian love: *men shall be* [φίλαυτοι] *lovers of themselves.* This is what kills the love of God, and the love of our brethren, and kindles that infernal fire of love to please themselves: riches make men voluptuous and covetous, &c. Truly, whatsoever become of men's curious computations of times, this wretched selfishness and decay of love may save us the labor of much *chronological* debate in this, and lead us, from this certain character of them, to conclude these to be the *latter times*, in a very strict sense. All other sins are come down along, and run combined now with this; but truly, uncharitableness is the main one. As old age is a rendezvous or meeting-place of maladies, but is especially subject to cold diseases, thus is it in the old age of the world: many sins abound, but especially coldness of love, as our Savior foretells it, that in *the last days the love of many shall wax cold.* Matt. xxiv. 12. As the disease of the youth of the world was, the *abounding of lust* (Gen. vi.), so that of its age is, *decay of love.* And as that heat called for a total deluge of waters, so this coldness calls for fire, the kindling of a universal fire, that shall make an end of it and the world together. *Aqua propter ardorem libidinis, ignis propter teporem charitatis:* Water because of the heat of lust, fire because of the coldness of charity.

But they alone are the happy men, and have the advantage of all the world, in whom the world is burnt up beforehand, by another fire, that Divine fire of the love of God, kindled in their hearts, by which they ascend up to him, and are reflected from him upon their brethren, with a benign heat and influence for their good. Oh! be unsatisfied with yourselves, and restless till you find it thus, till you find your hearts possessed of this excellent grace of love, that you may have it, and use it, and it may grow by using and acting. I could, methinks, heartily study on this, and weary

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you with the reiterated pressing of this one thing, if there were hopes, in so wearying you, to weary you out of those evils that are contrary to it, and in pressing this grace, to make any real impression of it upon your hearts. Besides all the further good that follows it, there is in this love itself so much peace and sweetness, as abundantly pays itself, and all the labor of it; whereas pride and malice do fill the heart with continual vexations and disquiet, and eat out the very bowels wherein they breed. Aspire to this, to be wholly bent, not only to procure or desire hurt to none, but to wish and seek the good of all: and as for those that are in Christ, surely, that will unite thy heart to them, and stir thee up, according to thy opportunities and power, to do them good, as parts of Christ, and of the same body with thyself.

VER. 10. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

THIS is the rule concerning the gifts and graces bestowed on men. And we have here, 1. Their difference in their kind and measure. 2. Their concordance in their source and use.

1. Their difference in their kind and measure is expressed in the first clause, *As every one hath received;* then, again, in the last clause, [ποικίλη] χάρις, *various* or *manifold grace;* where χάρις *grace*, is all one with the former, χάρισμα, *gift*, and is taken at large for all kind of endowments and furniture by which men are enabled for mutual good. One man hath riches, another, authority and command, another, wit or eloquence, or learning; and some, though eminent in some one, yet have a fuller conjuncture of divers of these. We find not more difference in visages and statures of body, than in qualifications and abilities of mind, which are the visage and stature of it, yea, the odds is far greater between man and man in this, than it can be in the other.

2. Now, this difference accords well with the accordance here expressed in their common spring and common use. For the variety of these many gifts suits well with the singular riches and wisdom of their one Giver, and with the common advantage and benefit of the many receivers. And in the usefulness of that variety to the receivers shine forth the bounty and wisdom of the Giver in so ordering all that diversity to one excellent end. So this ποικίλη χάρις, *manifold grace*, here, commends that πολυποίκιλος σοφία, *manifold wisdom*, that the apostle speaks of, Eph. iii. 10.

There is such an admirable beauty in this variety, such a symmetry and contemperature of different, yea, of contrary qualities, as speaks his riches, that so divers gifts are from the same Spirit; a kind of *embroidering*,* of many colors happily mixed, as the word ποικίλλειν signifies: as it is in the frame of the natural body of man, that lesser world, and in the composition of the greater world, thus it is in the church of God, the mystical body of Jesus Christ, exceeding both in excellency and beauty.

And as there is such art in this contrivance, and such comeliness in the resulting frame, so it is no less useful. And this chiefly commends the thing itself, and the supreme wisdom ordering it, that, as in the body each part hath not only its place for proportion and order, but its several use; and as in the world each part is beneficial to another, so here, every man's gift relates, and is fitted to some use for the good of others.

*Infer.* 1. The first thing which meets us here, it is very useful to know, that all is *received*, and received of *gift*, of most *free gift:* so the words do carry. Now this should most reasonably check all murmuring in those who receive least, and all insulting in those that receive most. Whatever it is, do not repine; but praise, how little soever it is, for it is a free gift. Again, how much soever it is, *be not high-minded, but fear;* boast not thyself, but humbly bless thy Lord. *For if thou didst receive it, why dost thou boast, as if thou hadst not received it?* 1 Cor. iv. 7.

*Inf.* 2. Every man hath received some gift, no man all gifts; and this, rightly considered, would keep all in a more even temper. As, in nature, nothing is altogether useless, so nothing is self-sufficient. This should keep the meanest from repining and discontent: He that hath the lowest rank in most respects, yet something he hath received, that is not only a good to himself, but, rightly improved, may be so to others likewise. And this will curb the loftiness of the most highly privileged, and teach them, not only to see some deficiencies in themselves, and some gifts in far meaner persons, which they want, but, besides the simple discovery of this, it will put them upon the use of what is in lower persons; not only to stoop to the acknowledgment, but even, withal, to the participation and benefit of it; not to trample upon all that is below them, but to take up and use things useful, though lying at their feet. Some flowers and herbs, that grow very low, are of a very fragrant smell and healthful use.

Thou that carriest it so high, losest much by it. Many poor Christians whom thou despisest to make use of, may have that in them which might be very useful for thee; but thou overlookest it, and treadest on it. St. Paul acknowledgeth he was *comforted by the coming of Titus*, though far inferior to him. Sometimes, a very mean, unlettered Christian may speak more profitably and comfortably, even to a knowing, learned man, than multitudes of his own best thoughts can do, especially in a time of weakness and darkness.

*Inf.* 3. As all is received and with that difference, so the third thing is, that all is received *to minister to each other*, and mutual benefit is the true use of all, suiting the mind of him who dispenses all, and the way of his

* The psalmist's word applied to the body. Psalm cxxxix. 12.

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dispensation. Thou art not proprietary lord of anything thou hast, but οἰκόνομος, *a steward;* and therefore oughtest gladly to be a good steward, that is both faithful and prudent in thy intrusted gifts, using all thou hast to the good of the household, and so to the advantage of thy Lord and Master. Hast thou abilities of estate, or body or mind? Let all be thus employed. Thinkest thou that thy wealth, or power, or wit, is thine, to do with as thou wilt, to engross to thyself, either to retain useless or to use; to hoard and wrap up, or to lavish out, according as thy humor leads thee? No, all is given as to a steward, wisely and faithfully to lay up and lay out. Not only thy outward and common gifts of mind, but even saving grace, which seems most intrusted and appropriated for thy private good, yet is not wholly for that: even thy graces are for the good of thy brethren.

Oh, that we would consider this in all, and look back and mourn on the fruitlessness of all that hath been in our hand all our life hitherto! If it has not been wholly fruitless, yet how far short of that fruit we might have brought forth! Any little thing done by us looks big in our eye; we view it through a magnifying glass; but who may not complain that their means, and health, and opportunities of several kinds, of doing for God and for our brethren, have lain dead upon their hands, in a great part? As Christians are defective in other duties of love, so most in that most important duty, of advancing the spiritual good of each other. Even they who have grace, do not duly use it to mutual edification. I desire none to leap over the bounds of their calling, or the rules of Christian prudence in their converse; yea, this were much to be blamed; but I fear lest unwary hands, throwing on water to quench that evil, have let some of it fall aside upon those sparks that should rather have been stirred and blown up.

Neither should the disproportion of gifts and graces hinder Christians to *minister one to another:* it should neither move the weaker to envy the stronger, nor the stronger to despise the weaker; but each, in his place, is to be serviceable to the others, as the apostle excellently presses, by that most fit resemblance of the parts of the body. *As the foot says not, Why am I not the eye or the head, the head can not say of the foot, I have no need of thee.* 1 Cor. xii. 15, 21. There is no envy, no despising in the natural body. Oh, the pity there should be so much in the mystical! Were we more spiritual, less of this would be found. In the meantime, Oh, that we were more agreeable to that happy estate we look for, in our present aspect and carriage one toward another! Though all the graces of the Spirit exist, in some measure, where there is one, yet not all in a like measure. One Christian is more eminent in meekness, another in humility, a third in zeal, *&c.* Now, by their spiritual converse one with another, each may be a gainer; and in many ways may a private Christian promote the good of others with whom he lives, by seasonable admonitions, and advice, and reproof, sweetened with meekness, but most by holy example, which is the most lively and most effectual speech.

Thou that hast greater gifts hast more intrusted in thy hand, and therefore the greater thy obligation to fidelity and diligence. Men in great place and public services, ought to stir themselves up by this thought to singular watchfulness and zeal. And in private converse one with another, we ought to be doing and receiving spiritual good. Are we not strangers here? Is it not strange that we so often meet and part, without a word of our home, or the way to it, or our advance toward it? Christians should be trading one with another in spiritual things; and he, surely, who faithfully uses most, receives most. This is comprehended under that word: *To him that hath* (*i. e.* possesses actively and usefully), *shall be given; and from him that hath not* (*i. e.* uses not), *shall be taken away even that which he hath.* Matt. xxv. 29. Merchants can feel in their trading a dead time, and complain seriously of it; but Christians, in theirs, either can suffer it and not see it, or see it and not complain, or, possibly, complain and yet not be deeply sensible of it.

Certainly, it can not be sufficiently regretted, that we are so fruitless in the Lord's work in this kind, that when we are alone we study it not more, nor seek it more by prayer, to know the true use of all we receive, and that we do not in society endeavor it accordingly; but we trifle out our time, and instead of the commerce of grace to our mutual enriching, we trade in vanity, and are, as it were, children exchanging shells and toys together.

This surely will lie heavy upon the conscience when we reflect on it, and shall come near the utter brink of time, looking forward on eternity, and then looking back to our days, so vainly wasted, and worn out to so little purpose. Oh! let us awake, awake ourselves and one another, to more fruitfulness and faithfulness, whatsoever be our received measure, less or more.

Be not discouraged: to have little in the account shall be no prejudice. The approbation runs not, *Thou hast much*, but, on the contrary, *Thou hast been faithful in little.* Great faithfulness in the use of small gifts hath great acceptance, and a great and sure reward. Great receipts engage to greater returns, and therefore require the greater diligence; and that not only for the increase of grace within, but for the assistance of it in others. Retired contemplation may be more pleasing, but due activity for God and his church is more profitable. Rachel was fair, but she was barren; Leah blear-eyed, but fruitful.

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VER. 11. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ; to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

EVERY part of the body of Christ, as it partakes of life with the rest, so it imparts service to the rest. But there be some more eminent, and, as I may say, *organic* parts of this body, and these are more eminently useful to the whole. Therefore the apostle, having enlarged into a general precept, adds a word in special reference to these special parts, the preachers of the word, and (which here I conceive is meant by deacons or ministers) the other assistant officers of the church of God.

These are co-ordained by Jesus Christ, as Lord of his own house, to be serviceable to him in it. He fits and sanctifies for this great work, all who are called unto it by himself. And they are directed for the acquitting of their great work, I. By a clear rule of the due manner. II. By the main end of its appointment.

I. Particular rules for the preaching of the word may be many, but this is a most comprehensive one which the apostle gives: *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.* It is clear from the rule, what speaking is regulated, and for brevity it is once expressed. If any man speak the oracles of God, let him speak them like themselves, *as the oracles of God.*

It is a chief thing in all serious actions, to take the nature of them aright: for this mainly regulates them, and directs in their performance. And this especially should be regarded in those things that are of highest worth and greatest weight, in spiritual employments, wherein it is most dangerous, and yet with us most ordinary, to mistake and miscarry. Were prayer considered as presence and speech with the great God, the King of Glory, Oh, how would this mould the mind! What a watchful, holy, and humble deportment would it teach! So that, truly, all directions for prayer might be summed up, after this same model, in this one, If any man pray, let him speak *as speaking with God;* just as here for preaching. If any man speak in that way, let him do it as *speaking from God*, that is, *as the oracles of God.* Under this, all the due qualifications of this holy work are comprised. I shall name but these three, which are primary, and others may be easily reduced to these: 1. *Faithfully.* 2. *Holily.* 3. *Wisely.*

1. In the first, *fidelity*, it is supposed that a man should have a competent insight and knowledge in these divine oracles, that first he learn before he teach; which many of us do not, though we pass through the schools and classes, and through the books too, wherein these things are taught, and bring with us some provision, such as may be had there. He that would faithfully teach of God, must be *taught of God*, be θεοδίδακτος, *God-learned;* and this will help to all the rest: will help him to be faithful in delivering the message as he receives it, not detracting, or adding, or altering; and as in setting forth that in general truths, so in the particular setting them home, declaring to his people their sins, and God's judgments following sin, especially in his own people.

2. A minister must speak *holily*, with that high esteem and reverence of the Great Majesty whose message he carries, that becomes the divinity of the message itself, those deep mysteries that no created spirits are able to fathom. Oh! this would make us tremble in the dispensing of these oracles, considering our impurities, and weaknesses, and unspeakable disproportion to so high a task. He had reason who said, "I am seized with amazement and horror as often as I begin to speak of God." And with this humble reverence is to be joined, ardent love to our Lord, to his truth, to his glory, and to his people's souls. These holy affections stand opposite to our blind boldness in rushing on this sublime exercise as a common work, and our dead coldness in speaking of things which our hearts are not warmed with; and so no wonder what we say seldom reaches further than the ear, or, at furthest, than the understanding and memory of our hearers. There is a correspondence; it is the heart speaks to the heart, and the understanding and memory the same, and the tongue speaks but to the ear. Further, this holy temper shuts out all private passion in delivering divine truths. It is a high profaning of his name and holy things, to make them speak our private pleas and quarrels; yea, to reprove sin after this manner is a heinous sin. To fly out into invectives, which, though not expressed so, yet are aimed as blows of self-revenge for injuries done to us, or fancied by us, this is to wind and draw the holy word of God to serve our unholy distempers, and to make it speak, not his meaning, but our own. Surely, this is not to speak *as the oracles of God*, but basely to abuse the word, as imposters in religion of old did their images, speaking behind them, and through them, what might make for their advantage. It is true that the word is to be particularly applied to reprove most the particular sins which most abound among a people; but this is to be done, not in anger, but in love.

3. The word is to be spoken *wisely*. By this I mean, in the way of delivering it, that it be done gravely and decently; that light expressions, and affected flourishes, and unseemly gestures, be avoided: and that there be a sweet contemperature of authority and mildness. But *who is sufficient for these things?*

Now, you that hear should certainly meet and agree in this too. If any hear, let him hear *as the oracles of God;* not as a well-turned sound, to help you to sleep an hour

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not as a human speech or oration, to displease or please you for an hour, according to the suiting of its strain and your palate; not as a school lesson, to add somewhat to your stock of knowledge, to tell you somewhat you knew not before, or as a feast of new notions. Thus the most relish a preacher, while they try his gift, and it is new with them, but a little time disgusts them. But hear *as the oracles of God.* The discovery of sin and death lying on us, and the discovery of a Savior, that takes these off; the sweet word of reconciliation, God wooing man; the Great King entreating for peace with a company of rebels—not that they are too strong for him, oh! no, but, on the contrary, he could utterly destroy them in one moment; these are the things brought you in this word. Therefore come to it with suitable reverence, with ardent desires, and hearts open to receive it *with meekness, as the ingrafted word that is able to save your souls.* James i. 21. It were well worth one day's pains of speaking and hearing, that we could learn somewhat, at least, how to speak and hear henceforward; to speak, and to hear, *as the oracles of God.*

In the other rule, of *ministering as of the ability that God giveth,* we may observe: 1. Ability, and that received from God; for other ability there is none for any good work, and least of all, for the peculiar ministration of his spiritual affairs in his house. 2. The using of this ability received from him for them.

And this, truly, is a chief thing for ministers, and for individual Christians, still to depend on the influence and strength of God; to do all his works in that strength. The humblest Christian, how weak soever, is the strongest. There is a natural wretched independency in us, that we would be the authors of our own works, and do all without him, without whom indeed we can do nothing. Let us learn to go more out of ourselves, and we shall find more strength for our duties, and against our temptations. Faith's great work is, to renounce self-power, and to bring in the power of God to be ours. Happy they that are weakest in themselves, sensibly so. That word of the apostle is theirs: they know what it means, though a riddle to the world: *When I am weak, then am I strong.* 2 Cor. xii. 10. Now,

II. The *end* of all this appointment is, *that in all God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.* All meet in this, if they move in their straight line: here concentre, not only these two sorts specified in this verse, but all sorts of persons that use aright any gift of God, as they are generally comprehended in the former verse. For this end relates to all, as it is expressed universally, *that in all,* in all persons and all things; the word bears both, and the thing itself extends to both.

Here we have, like that of the heavens, a circular motion of all sanctified good: it comes forth from God, through Christ, unto Christians, and moving in them to the mutual good of each other, returns through Christ unto God again, and takes them along with it, in whom it was, and had its motion.

All persons and all things shall pay this tribute, even they that most wickedly seek to withhold it; but this is the happiness of the saints, that they move willingly thus, are sweetly drawn, not forced or driven. They are gained to seek and desire this, to set in with God in the intention of the same end; to have the same purpose with him, his glory in all, and to prosecute his end by his direction, by the means and ways he appoints them.

This is his due, as God; and the declining from this, the squinting from this view to self-ends, especially in God's own peculiar work, is high treason. Yet, the base heart of man leads naturally this way, to intend himself in all, to raise his own esteem or advantage in some way. And in this the heart is so subtle, that it will deceive the most discerning, if they be not constant in suspecting and watching it. This is the great task, to overcome in this point; to have self under our feet, and God only in our eye and purpose in all.

It is most reasonable, his due as God the author of all, not only of all supervenient good, but even of being itself, seeing all is from him, that all be for him: *For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.* Rom. xi. *ult.*

As it is most just, so it is also most sweet, to aim in all at this, *that God be glorified:* it is the alone worthy and happy design, which fills the heart with heavenliness, and with a heavenly calmness; sets it above the clouds and storms of those passions which disquiet low, self-seeking minds. He is a miserable unsettled wretch, who cleaves to himself and forgets God; is perplexed about his credit, and gain, and base ends, which are often broken, and which, when he attains, yet they and he must shortly perish together. When his estate, or designs, or any comforts fail, how can he look to him at whom he looked so little before? May not the Lord say, *Go to the gods whom thou hast served, and let them deliver and comfort thee;* seek comfort from thyself, as thou didst all for thyself? What an appalment will this be! But he that hath resigned himself, and is all for God, may say confidently, that *the Lord is his portion.* This is the Christian's aim, to have nothing in himself, nor in anything, but on this tenure: all for the glory of my God,—my estate, family, abilities, my whole self, all I have and am. And as the love of God grows in the heart, this purpose grows: the higher the flame rises, the purer it is. The eye is daily more upon it; it is oftener in the mind in all actions than before. In common things, the very works of our callings, our

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very refreshments, to eat and drink, and sleep, are all for this end, and with a particular aim at it as much as may be; even the thought of it often renewed throughout the day, and at times, generally applied to all our ways and employments. It is this elixir that turns thy ordinary works into gold, into sacrifices, by the touch of it.

*Through Jesus Christ.*] The Christian in covenant with God, receives all this way, and returns all this way. And Christ possesses, and hath equal right with the Father to this glory, as he is equally the spring of it with him, as God. But it is conveyed through him as Mediator, who obtains all the grace we receive: and all the glory we return, and all our praise, as our spiritual sacrifice, is put into his hand as our High-priest, to offer up for us, that may be accepted.

Now the holy ardor of the apostle's affections, taken with the mention of this glory of God, carries him to a *doxology*, as we term it, a rendering of glory, in the middle of his discourse. Thus often we find in St. Paul likewise. Poor and short-lived is the glory and grandeur of men; like themselves, it is a shadow, and nothing; but this is solid and lasting, it is supreme, and abideth *for ever*. And the apostles, full of divine affections, and admiring nothing but God, do delight in this, and can not refrain from this at any time in their discourse: it is always sweet and seasonable, and they find it so. And thus are spiritual minds: a word of this nature falls on them as a spark on some matter that readily takes fire; they are straight inflamed with it. But alas! to us how much is it otherwise! The mention of the praises and glory of our God, is, to our hearts, as a spark falling either into a puddle of water, and foul water too, or at least, as upon green timber, that much fire will not kindle; there is so much moisture of our humors and corruptions, that all dies out with us, and we remain cold and dead.

But were not this a high and blessed condition, to be in all estates in some willing readiness to bear a part in this song, to acknowledge the greatness and goodness of our God, and to wish him glory in all? What are the angels doing? This is their business, and that without end. And seeing we hope to partake with them, we should even here, though in a lower key, and not so tunably neither, yet, as we may, begin it; and upon all occasions, our hearts should be often following in this sweet note, or offering at it, *To him be glory and dominion for ever.*

VER. 12. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.

VER. 13. But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

THIS fighting life, surely, when we consider it aright, we need not be dissuaded from loving it, but have rather need to be strengthened with patience to go through, and to fight on with courage and assurance of victory; still combating in a higher strength than our own, against sin within and troubles without. This is the great scope of this epistle, and the apostle often interchanges his advices and comforts in reference to these two. *Against sin* he instructs us in the beginning of this chapter, urging us to be armed, *armed with the same mind* that was in Christ, and here again, *against suffering*, and both in a like way. In the mortifying of sin, we suffer with him, as there he teaches, verse 1 of this chapter: and in the encountering of affliction, we suffer with him, as here we have it; and so, the same mind in the same sufferings will bring us to the same issue. *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, &c. But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye likewise may be glad with exceeding joy.*

The words, to the end of the chapter, contain grounds of encouragement and consolation for the children of God in sufferings, especially in suffering for God.

These two verses have these two things: I. The close conjunction of sufferings with the estate of a Christian. II. The due composure of a Christian toward suffering.

I. It is no new, and therefore no strange thing, that sufferings, hot sufferings, fiery ones, be the companions of religion. Besides the common miseries of human life, there is an accession of troubles and hatreds for that holiness of life to which the children of God are called.

It was the lot of the church from her wicked neighbors, and in the church, the lot of the most holy and peculiar servants of God, from the profane multitude. *Wo is me, my mother*, says Jeremiah, *that thou hast born me a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth.* Jer. xv. 10. And of all the prophets, says not our Savior, handling this same argument in his sermon, *So persecuted they the prophets that were before you?* Matt. v. 12. And afterward, he tells them what they might look for: *Behold*, says he, *I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.* Matt. x. 16. And, in general, there is no following of Christ, but with his badge and burden. Something is to be left, we ourselves are to be left: *Whosoever will be my disciple, let him deny himself;* and somewhat to take: *Take up his cross and follow me.* Matt. xvi. 24. And doth not the apostle give his scholars this universal lesson, as an infallible truth, *All that will live godly in Jesus Christ, shall suffer persecution?* Look, in the close of that roll of believers conquering in suffering, what a cluster of sufferings and torture you have. Heb. xi. 36, &c. Thus in the primitive times, the trial, and fiery trial, even literally so, continued long. Those wicked emperors hated the very innocency of Christians; and the people, though they knew their blameless carriage, yet, when any evil came, would



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pick this quarrel, and still cry, *Christianos ad leones.*

Now this, if we look to inferior causes, is *not strange*, the malignant ungodly world hating holiness, *hating the light*, yea, the very shadow of it. And the more the children of God walk like their Father and their home, the more unlike must they, of necessity, become to the world about them, and therefore become the very mark of all their enmities and malice.

And thus, indeed, the godly, though the *sons of peace*, are the improper causes, the occasion of much noise and disturbance in the world; as their Lord, the Prince of Peace, avows it openly of himself in that sense: *I came not to send peace, but a sword, to set a man at variance with his father, and the daughter against the mother*, &c. Matt. x. 34. If a son in a family begin to inquire after God, and withdraw from their profane or dead way, oh, what a clamor rises presently! "Oh, my son, or daughter, or wife, is become a plain fool," &c. And then is all done that may be, to quell and vex them, and make their life grievous to them.

The exact holy walking of a Christian really condemns the world about him: shows the disorder and foulness of their profane ways. The life of religion, set by the side of dead formality, discovers it to be a carcass, a lifeless appearance; and, for this, neither grossly wicked, nor decent, formal persons, can well digest it. There is in the life of a Christian a convincing light, that shows the deformity of the works of darkness, and a piercing heat, that scorches the ungodly, and stirs and troubles their consciences. This they can not endure, and hence rises in them a contrary fire of wicked hatred, and hence the trials, the fiery trials of the godly. If they could get those precise persons removed out of their way, they think they might then have more room, and live at more liberty: as it is, Rev. xi. 10, a *carousing* [χαρήσουσιν]. What a dance there was about the two dead bodies of the two witnesses! *The people and nations rejoiced and made merry, and sent gifts one to another, because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.* And from the same hearth, I mean the same wickedness of heart in the world, are the fires of persecution kindled against the saints in the world, and the bonfires of joy when they are rid of them.

And as this is an infernal fire of enmity against God, so it is blown by that spirit whose element it is. Satan stirs up and blows the coal, and raises the hatred of the ungodly against Christians.

But while he, and they in whom he powerfully works, are thus working for their vile ends in the persecution of the saints, HE who sovereignly orders all, is working in the same, his wise and gracious ends, and attains them, and makes the malice of his enemies serve his ends and undo their own. It is true, that by the heat of persecution many are scared from embracing religion: such as love themselves and their present ease, and others that seemed to have embraced it, are driven to let it go and fall from it; but yet, when all is well computed, religion is still upon the gaining hand. Those who reject it, or revolt from it, are such as have no true knowledge of it, or share in it, nor in that happiness in which it ends. But they that are indeed united to Jesus Christ, do cleave the closer to him, and seek to have their hearts more fastened to him, because of the trials that they are, or may probably be put to. And in their victorious patience appears the invincible power of religion where it hath once gained the heart, that it can not be beaten or burnt out: itself is a fire more mighty than all the fires kindled against it. The love of Christ conquers and triumphs in the hardest sufferings of life, and in death itself.

And this hath been the means of kindling it in other hearts which were strangers to it, when they beheld the victorious patience of the saints, who conquered dying, as their Head did; who wearied their tormentors, and triumphed over their cruelty by a constancy far above it.

Thus, these fiery trials make the lustre of faith most appear, as gold shines brightest in the furnace; and if any dross be mixed with it, it is refined and purified from it by these trials, and so it remains, by means of the fire, purer than before. And both these are in the resemblance here intended; that the fire of sufferings is for the advantage of believers, both as trying the excellency of faith, giving evidence of it, what it is, and also purifying it from earth and drossy mixtures, and making it more excellently what it is, raising it to a higher pitch of refinedness and worth. In these fires, as faith is tried, so the word on which faith relies is tried, and is found *all gold*, most precious, no refuse in it. The truth and the sweetness of the promises are much confirmed in the Christian's heart, upon his experiment of them in his sufferings. His God is found to be as good as his word, being with him when he goes through the fire (Isa. xliii. 2), preserving him, so that he loses nothing except dross, which is a gainful loss—leaves only of his corruption behind him.

Oh! how much worth is it, and how doth it endear the heart to God, to have found him sensibly present in the times of trouble, refreshing the soul with dews of spiritual comfort in the midst of the flames of fiery trial.

One special advantage of these fires is, the purifying of a Christian's heart from the love of the world and of present things. It is true, the world at best is base and despicable, in respect of the high estate and hopes of a believer; yet still there is somewhat within him that would bend him downward, and draw him to too much complacency in outward things, if they were much to his mind. Too kind usage might sometimes make him for

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get himself and think himself at home, at least so much as not to entertain those longings after home, and that ardent progress homeward, that become him. It is good for us, certainly, to find hardship, and enmities, and contempts here, and to find them frequent, that we may not think them *strange*, but ourselves *strangers*, and may think it were strange for us to be otherwise entertained. This keeps the affections more clear and disengaged, sets them upward. Thus the Lord makes the world displeasing to his own, that they may turn in to him, and seek all their consolations in himself. Oh, unspeakable advantage!

II. The composure of a Christian, in reference to sufferings, is prescribed in these two following, *resolving and rejoicing:* 1. Resolving to endure them, reckoning upon them, *Think it not strange*, μὴ ξενίζεσθε; 2. Rejoicing in them, χαίρετε, *Be glad, inasmuch*, &c.

*Be not strangers in it.*] Which yet naturally we would be. We are willing to hear of peace and ease, and would gladly believe what we extremely desire. It is a thing of prime concern, to take at first a right notion of Christianity. This many do not, and so either fall off quickly, or walk on slowly and heavily; they do not reckon right the charges, take not into the account the duties of doing and suffering, but think to perform some duties, if they may with ease, and have no other foresight; they do not consider that self-denial, that fighting against a man's self, and fighting vehemently with the world, those trials, fiery trials, which a Christian must encounter with. As they observe of other points, so popery is in this very compliant with nature, which is a very bad sign in religion. We would be content it were true that the true church of Christ had rather prosperity and pomp for her badge than the cross; much ease and riches, and few or no crosses, except they were painted and gilded crosses, such as that church hath chosen, instead of real ones.

Most men would give religion a fair countenance, if it gave them fair weather; and they that do indeed acknowledge Christ to be the Son of God, as St. Peter did, yet are naturally as unwilling as he was to hear the hard news of suffering: and if their advice might have place, would readily be of his mind, *Be it far from thee, Lord.* Matthew xvi. 22, 23. His good confession was not, but this kind advice was *from flesh and blood*, and from an evil spirit, as the sharp answer tells: *Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me.*

You know what kind of Messiah the Jews generally dreamed of, and therefore took offence at the meanness and sufferings of Christ, expecting an earthly king, and an outwardly flourishing state. And the disciples themselves, after they had been long with him, were still in that same dream, when they were contesting about imaginary places. Yea, they were scarcely well out of it, even after his suffering and death: all the noise and trouble of that had not well awaked them. *We trusted it had been he which should have restored Israel.* Luke xxxiv. 12.

And, after all that we have read and heard of ancient times, and of Jesus Christ himself, his sufferings in the flesh, and of his apostles and his saints, from one age to another, yet still we have our inclinations to this practice of driving troubles far off from our thoughts, till they come upon our backs, fancying nothing but rest and ease, till we be shaken rudely out of it.

How have we of late flattered ourselves, many of us one year after another, upon slight appearances, "Oh, now it will be peace!" And, behold, still trouble hath increased, and these thoughts have proved the lying visions of our own hearts, while *the Lord hath not spoken of it.* Ezek. xiii. 7. And thus, of late, have we thought it at hand, and taken ways of our own to hasten it, which, I fear, will prove fool's haste, as you say.

You that know the Lord, seek him earnestly for the averting of further troubles and combustions, which, if you look aright, you will find threatening us as much as ever. And withal, seek hearts prepared and fixed for days of trial, *fiery trial.* Yea, though we did obtain some breathing of our outward peace, yet shall not the followers of Christ want their trials from the hatred of the ungodly world. *If it persecuted me*, says he, *it will also persecute you.* John xv. 20.

Acquaint, therefore, your thoughts and hearts with sufferings, that when they come, thou and they not being strangers, may agree and comply the better. Do not afflict yourselves with vain fears beforehand of troubles to come, and so make uncertain evils a certain vexation by advance; but thus forethink the hardest trial you are likely to be put to for the name and cause of Christ, and labor for a holy stability of mind, for encountering it if it should come upon you. Things certainly fall the lighter on us, when they fall first upon our thoughts. In this way, indeed, of an imagined suffering, the conquest beforehand may be but imaginary, and thou mayest fail in the trial. Therefore, be still humble and dependant on the strength of Christ, and seek to be previously furnished with much distrust of thyself, and much trust in him, with much denial of thyself, and much love to him; and this preparing and training of the heart may prove useful, and make it more dexterous, when brought to a real conflict. In all, both beforehand and in the time of the trial, make thy Lord Jesus all thy strength. That is our only way in all to be conquerors, *to be more than conquerors, through him that loved us.* Rom. viii. 37.

*Think it not strange*, for it is not. Suit your thoughts to the experience and verdict of all times, and to the warnings that the

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Spirit of God hath given us in the Scriptures, and our Savior himself from his own mouth, and in the example which he showed in his own person. But the point goes higher.

*Rejoice.*] Though we think not the sufferings *strange*, yet, may we not well think that rule somewhat strange, to *rejoice* in them? No, it will be found as reasonable as the other, being duly considered. And it rests upon the same ground, which will bear both. *Inasmuch as you are partakers of the sufferings of Christ.*

If the children of God consider their trials, not in their natural bitterness, but in the sweet love whence they spring, and the sweet fruits that spring from them, that we are our Lord's gold, and that he tries us in the furnace to purify us (as in the former verse), this may beget not only patience, but gladness even in the sufferings. But add we this, and truly it completes the reason of this way of rejoicing in our saddest sufferings, that in them we are *partakers of the sufferings of Christ.*

So then, 1. Consider this twofold connected participation, of the sufferings of Christ and of the after-glory. 2. The present joy, even in sufferings, springing from that participation.

I need not tell you, that this communion in sufferings, is not in point of expiation, or satisfaction to Divine justice, which was the peculiar end of the sufferings of Christ *personal*, but not of the common sufferings of Christ *mystical*. *He bare our sins in his own body on the tree*, and in bearing them, took them away: we bear his sufferings, as his body united to him by his Spirit. Those sufferings which were his personal burden, we partake the sweet fruits of; they are accounted ours, and we are acquitted by them; but the endurance of them was his high and incommunicable task, in which none at all were with him. Our communion in these as fully completed by himself in his natural body, is the ground of our comfort and joy in those sufferings that are completed in his mystical body, the church.

This is indeed our joy, that we have so light a burden, so sweet an exchange; the weight of sin quite taken off our backs, and all bound on his cross only, and our crosses, the badges of our conformity to him, laid indeed on our shoulders, but the great weight of them likewise held up by his hand, that they overpress us not. These fires of our trial may be corrective, and purgative of the remaining power of sin, and they are so intended; but Jesus Christ alone, in the sufferings of his own cross, was the burnt-offering, *the propitiation for our sins.*

Now, although he hath perfectly satisfied for us, and saved us by his sufferings, yet this conformity to him in the way of suffering is most reasonable. Although our holiness doth not stand in point of law, nor come in at all in the matter of justifying us, yet we are called and appointed to holiness in Christ, as assimilating us to him, our glorious head; and we do really receive it from him, that we may be like him. So these our sufferings bear a very congruous likeness to him, though in no way as an accession to his in expiation, yet as a part of his image; and therefore the apostle says, even in this respect, that we are *predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son.* Rom. viii. 29. Is it fit that we should not follow where our Captain led, and went first, but that he should lead through rugged, thorny ways, and we pass about to get away through flowery meadows? As his natural body shared with his head in his sufferings, so ought his body mystical to share with him, as its head —the buffetings and spittings on his face, the thorny crowns on his head, a pierced side, nailed hands and feet: if we be parts of him, can we think that a body finding nothing but ease, and bathing in delights, can agree to a head so tormented? I remember what that pious duke said at Jerusalem, when they offered to crown him king there, *Nolo aurcam, ubi Christus spineam:* No crown of gold, where Christ Jesus was crowned with thorns.

This is the way we must follow, or else resolve to leave him; the way of the cross is the royal way to the crown. He said it, and reminded them of it again, that they might take the deep impression of it: *Remember what I said unto you, the servant is not greater than the Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you: if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.* John xv. 20. And particularly in point of reproaches: *If they have called the master Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?* Matt. x. 24. A bitter scoff, an evil name, reproaches for Christ, why do these fret thee? They were a part of thy Lord's entertainment while he was here. Thou art, even in this, a *partaker of his sufferings*, and in this way is he bringing thee forward to the partaking of his glory. That is the other thing.

*When his glory shall be revealed.*] Now that he is hidden, little of his glory is seen. It was hidden while he was on earth, and now it is hidden in heaven, where he is. And as for his body here, his church, it hath no pompous dress, nor outward splendor; and the particular parts of it, the saints, are poor despised creatures, the very refuse of men in outward respects and common esteem. So he himself is not seen, and his followers, the more they are seen and looked on by the world's eye, the more meanness appears. True, as in the days of his humiliation some rays were breaking forth through the veil of his flesh and the cloud of his low despicable condition, thus it is sometimes with his followers: a glance of his image strikes the very eye of the world, and forces some acknowledgment and a kind of reverence in

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the ungodly; but, commonly, Christ and his followers are covered with all the disgraces and ignominies the world can put on them. But there is a day wherein he will appear, and it is at hand; and then *he shall be glorious*, even *in his* despised *saints*, and *admired in them that believe*, 2 Thess. i. 10: how much more in the matchless brightness of his own glorious person!

In the mean time, he is hidden, and they are hidden in him; *Our life is hid with Christ in God*. Col. iii. 3. The world sees nothing of his glory and beauty, and even his own see not much; they have but a little glimmering of him, and of their own happiness in him; know little of their own high condition, and what they are born to. But in that bright day, he shall shine forth in his royal dignity, and *every eye shall see him*, and be overcome with his splendor. Terrible shall it be to those that formerly despised him and his saints, but to them it shall be the gladdest day that ever arose upon them, a day that shall never set or be benighted; the day they so much longed and looked out for, the full accomplishment of all their hopes and desires. Oh, how dark were all our days without the hope of this day!

Then, says the apostle, *ye shall rejoice* with exceeding *joy;* and to the end you may not fall short of that joy in the participation of glory, fall not back from a cheerful progress in the communion of those sufferings that are so closely linked with it, and will so surely lead unto it, and end in it. For in this the apostle's expressions, this glory and joy is set before them, as the great matter of their desires and hopes, and the certain end of their present sufferings.

Now, upon these grounds, the admonition will appear reasonable, and not too great a demand, *to rejoice* even *in sufferings*.

*It* is true, that passage in the epistle to the Hebrews, ch. xii. 11, opposes present affliction to joy. But, 1st, If you mark, it is but in the appearance, or outward visage, *It seemeth not to be matter of joy, but of grief*. To look upon, it hath not a smiling countenance; yet joy may be under it. And, 2. Though to the flesh it is what it seems, grief, and not joy, yet there may be under it spiritual joy; yea, the affliction itself may help and advance that joy. 3. Through the natural sense of it, there will be some alloy or mixture of grief, so that the joy can not be pure and complete, but yet there may be joy even in it. This the apostle here clearly grants: *Rejoice* now *in* suffering that you may *rejoice exceedingly after* it, ἀγαλλιώμενοι, *leaping for joy*. Doubtless, this joy, at present, is but a little parcel, a drop of that sea of joy. Now it is joy, but more is reserved. Then, *they shall leap for joy*. Yet even at present, rejoice in *trial*, yea, in *fiery trial*. This may be done. The children of God are not called to so sad a life as the world imagines: besides what is laid up for them in heaven, they have even here, their rejoicings and songs in their distresses, as those prisoners had their psalms even at midnight, after their stripes, and in their chains, before they know of a sudden deliverance. (Acts xvi. 25.) True, there may be a darkness within, clouding all the matter of their joy, but even that darkness is the seed-time of after-joy: light is sown in that darkness, and shall spring up; and not only shall they have a rich crop at full harvest, but even some first-fruits of it here, in pledge of the harvest.

And this they ought to expect, and to seek after with minds humble and submissive as to the measure and time of it, that they may be partakers of spiritual joy, and may by it be enabled to go patiently, yea, cheerfully, through the tribulations and temptations that lie in their way homeward. And for this end they ought to endeavor after a more clear discerning of their interest in Christ, that they may know they partake of him, and so that, in suffering, they are partakers of his sufferings and shall be partakers of his glory.

Many afflictions will not cloud and obstruct this, so much as one sin; therefore, if ye would walk cheerfully, be most careful to walk holily. All the winds about the earth make not an earthquake, but only that within.

Now this Joy is grounded on this communion [1] in sufferings, then, [2] in glory.

[1.] Even in sufferings themselves. It is a sweet, a joyful thing to be a sharer with Christ in anything. All enjoyments wherein he is not, are bitter to a soul that loves him, and all sufferings with him are sweet. The worst things of Christ are more truly delightful than the best thing of the world; his afflictions are sweeter than their pleasures, his *reproach* more glorious than their honors, and more rich than their treasures, as Moses accounted them. Heb. xi. 26. Love delights in likeness and communion, not only in things otherwise pleasant, but in the hardest and harshest things, which have not anything in them desirable, but only that likeness. So that this thought is very sweet to a heart possessed with this love: what does the world by its hatred, and persecutions, and revilings for the sake of Christ, but make me more like him, give me a greater share with him, in that which he did so willingly undergo for me? *When he was sought for to be made a king*, as St. Bernard remarks, *He escaped but when he was sought to be brought to the cross, he freely yielded himself*. And shall I shrink and creep back from what he calls me to suffer for his sake! Yea, even all my other troubles and sufferings, I will desire to have stamped thus, with this conformity to the sufferings of Christ, in the humble, obedient, cheerful endurance of them, and the giving up my will to my Father's.

The following of Christ makes any way pleasant. His faithful followers refuse no march after him, be it through deserts, and mountains, and storms, and hazards, that will affright self-pleasing, easy spirits. Hearts

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kindled and actuated with the Spirit of Christ, will *follow him wheresoever he goeth.*

As he speaks it for warning to his disciples, *If they persecuted me, they will persecute you*, so he speaks it for comfort to them, and sufficient comfort it is, *If they hate you, they hated me before you.* John xv. 18, 20.

[2.] Then add the other: see whither it tends. *He shall be revealed in his glory*, and ye shall even overflow with joy in the partaking of that glory. Therefore, rejoice now in the midst of all your sufferings. Stand upon the advanced ground of the promises and the covenant of grace, and by faith look beyond this moment, and all that is in it, to that day wherein *everlasting joy shall be upon your heads*, a crown of it, and *sorrow and mourning shall flee away.* Isa. li. 11. Believe in this day, and the victory is won. Oh! that blessed hope, well fixed and exercised, would give other manner of spirits. What zeal for God would it not inspire! What invincible courage against all encounters! How soon will this pageant of the world vanish, that men are gazing on, these pictures and fancies of pleasures and honors, falsely so called, and give place to the real glory of the sons of God, when this blessed Son, who is God, shall be seen appearing in full majesty, and all his brethren in glory with him, all clothed in their robes! And if you ask, who are they, why, *these are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.* Rev. vii. 14.

VER. 14. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

VER. 15. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body in other men's matters.

VER. 16. Yet, if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

THE WORD is the Christian's magazine, both of instructions and of encouragements, whether for *doing* or for *suffering*; and this epistle is rich in both. Here, what the apostle had said concerning suffering in general, he specifies in the particular case of suffering *reproaches.* But this seems not to come up to the height of that expression which he hath used before: he spoke of *fiery trial*, but this of *reproach* seems rather fit to be called an *airy trial*, the blast of vanishing words. Yet, upon trial, it will be found to be (as here it is accounted) a very sharp, a *fiery trial.*

*First*, then, of this particular kind of suffering; and *secondly*, of the comfort and advice furnished against it.

*If ye be reproached.*] If we consider both the nature of the thing and the strain of the Scriptures, we shall find that reproaches are among the sharpest sort of sufferings, and are indeed *fiery trials. The tongue is a fire*, says St. James, and reproaches are the flashes of that fire; they are a subtle kind of flame, like that lightning which, as naturalists say, crusheth the bones, and yet breaks not the flesh; they wound not the body, as do tortures and whips, but through a whole skin they reach the spirit of a man, and cut it. So Psalm xlii. 10: *As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me.* The fire of reproaches preys upon and dries up the *precious ointment of a good name*, to use Solomon's comparison, Eccl. vii. 4. A good name is in itself good, a prime outward good; and take us according to our natural temper and apprehensions (according to which we feel things), most men are, and some excessively, too tender and delicate in it. Although, truly, I take it rather to be a weakness than true greatness of spirit, as many fancy it, to depend much on the opinion of others, and to feel it deeply, yet, I say, considering that it is commonly thus with men, and that there are the remains of this, as of other frailties in the children of God, it can not well be but reproaches will ordinarily much afflict men, and to some kind of spirits, possibly, be more grievous than great bodily pain or suffering.

And inasmuch as they are thus grievous, the Scripture accounts them so, and very usually reckons them among sufferings: it is apt to name them more than any other kind of suffering, and that with good reason, not only for their piercing nature (as we have said), but withal for their frequency and multitude; and some things we suffer do, as flies, more trouble by their number than by their weight.

Now, there is no one kind of suffering, of such constancy and commonness, and abundance, as reproaches are. When other persecutions cease, yet these continue: when all other fires of martyrdom are put out, these burn still. In all times and places, the malignant world is ready to revile religion; not only avowed enemies of it, but the greatest part even of those that make a vulgar profession of it: they that outwardly receive the *form* of religion, are yet, many of them, inwardly haters of the *power* of it, and Christians who are such merely in name, will scorn and reproach those that are Christians indeed.

And this is done with such ease by every one, that these arrows fly thick: every one that hath a tongue can shoot them, even base *abjects* (Psalm xxxv. 15); and *the drunkards make songs*, as Jeremiah complains. The meanest sort can reach this point of persecution, and be active in it against the children of God. They who can not, or dare not offer them any other injury, will not fear, nor spare, to let fly a taunt or bitter word. So that whereas other sufferings are rarer, these meet them daily:—*While they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?* Psal. xlii. 10.

We see, then, how justly reproaches are often mentioned among and beyond other trials, and accounted persecution. See Matt. v. 10, 11: *Blessed are ye when men shall re-*

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*vile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.* In the history of the casting out of Hagar and her son, Gen. xxi. 9, all we find laid to Ishmael's charge is, *Sarah saw him mocking.* And as *he that was born after the flesh* did then, in this manner, *persecute him that was born after the Spirit* (Gal. iv. 29), even so it is now. And thus are reproaches mentioned among the sufferings of Christ in the gospel, and not as the least: the railings and mockings that were darted at him, and fixed to the Cross, are mentioned more than the very nails that fixed him. And so, Hebrews xii. 2, *the shame* of the cross: though he was above it and despised it, yet that *shame* added much to the burden of it. So, verse 3: *Consider him who endured the contradiction of sinners.*

Now the other thing is, that this is the lot of Christians, as it was of Christ. And why should they look for more kindness and better usage, and think to find acclamations and applauses from the world, which so vilified their Lord? Oh, no! The vain heart must be weaned from these, to follow Christ. If we will indeed follow him, it must be tamed to share with him in this point of suffering, not only mistakes and misconstructions, but bitter scoffings and reproaches. Why should not our minds ply and fold to this upon that very reason which he so reasonably presses again and again on his disciples? *The servant is not greater than his master.* And, in reference to this very thing, he adds: *If they have called the Master, Beelzebub, how much more will they speak so of his servants.* Matt. x. 24, 25.

*Infer.* 1. Seeing it is thus, I shall first press upon the followers of Christ the apostle's rule here, to keep their suffering spotless, that it may not be comfortless. Resolve to endure it, but resolve likewise that it shall be on your part innocent suffering. *Suffer not as evil-doers.* Besides that the ways of wickedness are most unsuitable to your holy calling, look to the enmity about you, and gain even out of that evil, this great good of more circumspect and holy walking. Recollect who you are, and where you are, your own weakness, and the world's wickedness. This our Savior represents, and upon it gives that suitable rule: *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.—Prudens simplicitas.* Know you not what exact eyes of others are upon you? Will you not thence learn exactly to eye yourselves and all your ways, and seek of God, with David, *to be led in righteousness, because of your enemies, your observers?* Psalm xxvii. 11.

This is the rule here: verse 16. *Suffer as Christians,* holily and blamelessly, that the enemy may not know where to fasten his hold. As the wrestlers anointed their bodies, that the hands of their antagonists might not fasten upon them, thus, truly they that walk and suffer as Christians anointed with the Spirit of Christ, their enemies can not well fasten their hold upon them.

To you, therefore, who love the Lord Jesus, I recommend this especially to be careful that all your reproaches may be indeed for Christ, and not for anything in you unlike to Christ; that there be nothing save the matter of your rod. Keep the quarrel as clean and unmixed as you can, and this will advantage you much, both within and without, in the peace and firmness of your minds, and in the refutation of your enemies. This will make you *as a brazen wall,* as the Lord speaks to the prophet: *they shall fight against you, but shall not prevail.* Jer. xv. 20.

Keep far off from all impure, unholy ways. *Suffer not as evil-doers,* no, nor as *busy-bodies.* Be much at home, setting things at rights within your own breast, where there is so much work, and such daily need of diligence, and then you will find no leisure for unnecessary idle pryings into the ways and affairs of others; and further than your calling and the rules of Christian charity engage you, you will not interpose in any matters without you, nor be found proud and censorious, as the world is ready to call you.

Shun the appearances of evil; walk warily and prudently in all things. Be not *heady, nor self-willed,* no, not in the best thing. Walk not upon the utter brink and hedge of your liberty, for then you shall be in danger of overpassing it. Things that are lawful may be inexpedient, and, in case there is fear of scandal, ought either to be wholly forborne, or used with much prudence and circumspection. Oh, study in all things to adorn the gospel, and under a sense of your own unskilfulness and folly, beg wisdom from above, that *anointing that will teach you all things,* much of that *holy Spirit, that will lead you in the way of all truth;* and then, in that way, whatsoever may befall you, *suffer* it, and however you may be vilified and reproached, *happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.*

*Inf.* 2. But if to be thus reproached is to be happy, then, certainly, their reproachers are not less unhappy. If on those resteth the *Spirit of glory and of God,* what spirit is in these, but the spirit of Satan, and of shame and vileness? Who is the basest, most contemptible kind of person in the world? Truly, I think, an avowed contemner and mocker of holiness. Shall any such be found among us?

I charge you all in this name of Christ, that you do not entertain godless prejudices against the people of God. Let not your ears be open to, nor your hearts close with the calumnies and lies that may be flying abroad of them and their practices; much less open your mouths against them, or let any disgraceful word be heard from you. And when you meet with undeniable real frailties, know the *law of love,* and to practise it. Think, "This is blameworthy, yet let me not turn it to the

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reproach of those persons, who, notwithstanding, may be sincere, much less to the reproach of other persons professing religion, and then cast it upon religion itself."

My brethren, beware of sharing with the ungodly in this tongue-persecution of Christians. There is a day at hand, wherein the Lord will make inquiry after these things. If we shall be made accountable for *idle words* (as we are warned, Matt. xii. 36), how much more for bitter malicious words uttered against any, especially against the saints of God, whom, however the world may reckon, he esteems his precious ones, his treasure! You that now can look on them with a scornful eye, which way shall you look when they shall be beautiful and glorious, and all the ungodly clothed with shame? Oh, do not reproach them, but rather come in and share with them in the way of holiness, and in all the sufferings and reproaches that follow it; for if you partake of their disgrace, you shall share in glory with them, in the day of their Lord's appearing.

The words contain two things, the *evil* of these reproaches supposed, and the *good* expressed. The *evil* supposed, that they are trials, and hot trials, has been treated of already. Now as to the good expressed.

*Happy are ye.*] Ye are happy even at present, in the very midst of them: they do not trouble your happy estate, yea, they advance it. Thus solid, indeed, is the happiness of the saints, that in the lowest condition it remains the same: in disgraces, in caves, in prisons and chains, cast them where you will, still they are happy. A diamond in the mire, sullied and trampled on, yet still retains its own worth. But this is more, that the very things that seem to make them miserable, do not only not do that, but, on the contrary, do make them the more happy: they are gainers by their losses, and attain more liberty by their thraldoms, and more honor by their disgraces, and more peace by their troubles. The world and all their enemies are exceedingly befooled in striving against them: not only can they not undo them, but by all their enmity and practices, they do them pleasure, and raise them higher. With what weapons shall they fight? How shall a Christian's enemies set upon him? Where shall they hit him, seeing that all the wrongs they do him, do indeed enrich and ennoble him, and that the more he is depressed, he flourishes the more. Certainly, the blessedness of a Christian is matchless and invincible.

But how holds this, that a Christian is *happy in reproaches and by them?* It is not through their nature and virtue, for they are evil (so Matt. v. 11); but first, by reason of the cause; secondly, by reason of the accompanying and consequent comfort.

[1.] By reason of the *cause* of these reproaches. This we have negatively at verse 15. *Not as an evil-doer;* that stains thy holy profession, damps thy comfort, and clouds thy happiness, disprofits thee, and dishonors thy Lord. But the cause is stated positively, ver. 14, 16—*for the name of Christ.* And what is there so rough which that will not make pleasant, to suffer with Christ and for Christ, who suffered so much and so willingly for thee? Hath he not gone through all before thee, and made all easy and lovely? Hath he not sweetened poverty, and persecution, and hatred, and disgraces, and death itself, perfumed the grave, and turned it from a pit of horror into a sweet resting-bed? And thus love of Christ judgeth: it thinks all lovely which is endured for him, is glad to meet with difficulties, and is ambitious of suffering for him. Scorn or contempt is a thing of hard digestion, but much inward heat of love digests it easily. Reproaches are bitter, but the reproaches of Christ are sweet. Take their true value, Heb. xi. 26: *The reproaches of Christ are greater riches than the treasures of Egypt:* his very worst things, better than the best of the world. A touch of Christ turns all into gold: his reproaches are *riches*, as it is expressed there, and *honor*, as here. *Happy!* Not only afterward shall ye be happy, but *happy are ye* at present; and that, not only in apprehension of that after-happiness, as sure, and as already present to faith realizing it, but even [2] in that they now possess the presence and comforts of the Spirit.

*For the spirit of glory.*] This accompanies disgraces for him; *his* Spirit, *the Spirit of glory and of God.* With your sufferings goes the name of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ: take them thus, when reproaches are cast upon you for his name, and you are enabled to bear them by his Spirit. And surely his Spirit is most fit to support you under them, yea, to raise you above them. They are ignominious and inglorious, he is the Spirit of glory; they are human reproaches; he, the Divine Spirit, *the Spirit of glory and of God*, that is, the glorious Spirit of God.

And this is the advantage: the less the Christian finds esteem and acceptance in the world, the more he turns his eye inward, to see what is there; and there he finds the world's contempt counterpoised by a weight of excellency and glory, even in this present condition, as the pledge of the glory before him. The reproaches be fiery: but the *Spirit of glory resteth upon you*, doth not give you a passing visit, but stays within you, and is indeed yours. And in this the Christian can take comfort, and let the foul weather blow over, let all the scoffs and contempts abroad pass as they come, having a glorious Spirit within, such a guest honoring him with his presence, abode, and sweet fellowship, being indeed one with him. So that rich miser at Athens could say—when they scorned him in the streets, he went home to his bags, and hugging himself there at the sight, let them say what they would:—

——"Populus me sibilat: at mihi plaudo
Ipse domi, simul ac nummos contemplor in arca."

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How much more reasonably may the Christian say, "Let them revile and bark, I have riches and honor enough that they see not." And this is what makes the world, as they are a malicious party, so to be an incompetent judge of the Christian's estate. They see the rugged unpleasant outside only: the right inside their eye can not reach. We were miserable indeed, were our comforts such as they could see.

And while this is the constant estate of a Christian, it is usually most manifested to him in the time of his greatest sufferings. Then (as he said) he naturally turns inward and sees it most, and accordingly finds it most. God making this happy supplement and compensation, that when his people have least of the world, they have most of himself; when they are most covered with the world's disfavor, his favor shines brightest to them. As Moses, when he was in the cloud, had nearest access and speech with God; so when the Christian is most clouded with distresses and disgraces, then doth the Lord often show himself most clearly to him.

If you be indeed Christians, you will not be so much thinking, at any time, how you may be free from all sufferings and despisings, but rather, how you may go strongly and cheerfully through them. Lo, here is the way: seek a real and firm interest in Christ, and a participation of Christ's Spirit, and then a look to him will make all easy and delightful. Thou wilt be ashamed within thyself to start back, or yield one foot, at the encounter of a taunt or reproach for him. Thou wilt think, "For whom is it? Is it not for him who for my sake hid not his face from shame and spitting?" And further, "He died: now, how should I meet death for him, who shrink at the blast of a scornful word?"

If you would know whether this his Spirit is and resteth in you, it can not be better known than, 1*st*. By that very love, ardent love to him, and high esteem of him, and thence a willingness, yea, a gladness to suffer anything for him. 2*d*. This *Spirit of glory* sets the heart on glory. True glory makes heavenly things excellent in our thoughts, and sets the world, the better and the worse, the honor and the dishonor of it, at a low rate.

The spirit of the world is a base, ignoble spirit, even the highest pitch of it. Theirs are but poor designs who are projecting for kingdoms, compared to those of the Christian, which ascend above all things under the sun, and above the sun itself, and therefore he is not shaken with the threats of the world, nor taken with its offers. Excellent is the answer which St. Basil gives, in the person of those martyrs, to that emperor who made them (as he thought) great proffers to draw them off: "Why," say they, "dost thou bid us so low as pieces of the world? We have learned to despise it all." This is not stupidity, nor an affected stoutness of spirit, but an humble sublimity, which the natural spirit of a man can not reach unto.

But wilt thou say still, "This stops me, I do not find this Spirit in me: if I did, then I think I could be willing to suffer anything.' To this, for the present, I say not more than this: Dost thou desire that Christ may be glorified, and couldst thou be content it were by thy suffering in any kind thou mayest be called to undergo for him? Art thou willing to give up thine own interest to study and follow Christ's, and to sacrifice thine own credit and name to advance his? Art thou unwilling to do anything that may dishonor him, but not unwilling to suffer anything that may honor him? Or wouldst thou be thus? Then be not disputing, but up and walk on in his strength.

Now, if any say, But his name is dishonored by these reproaches—true, says the apostle, *on their part it is so, but not on yours*. They that reproach you, do their best to make it reflect on Christ and his cause, but thus it is only *on their part*. You are sufferers for his name, and so you *glorify* it: your faith and patience, and your victory by these, do declare the power of Divine grace, and the efficacy of the gospel. These have made torturers ashamed, and induced some beholders to share with those who were tortured. Thus, though the profane world intends, as far as it can reach, to fix dishonor upon the profession of Christ, yet it sticks not, but on the contrary, he is glorified by your constancy.

And as the ignominy fastens not, but the glory from the endurance does, so Christians are obliged, and certainly are ready, according to the apostle's zeal, ver. 16, *to glorify God on this behalf*, that, as he is glorified in them, so they may glorify and bless him who hath dignified them so; that whereas we might have been left to a sad sinking task, to have suffered for various guilts, our God hath changed the tenor and nature of our sufferings, and makes them to be *for the name of Christ*.

Thus, a spiritual mind doth not swell on a conceit of constancy and courage, which is the readiest way of self-undoing, but acknowledges all to be *gift*, even suffering: *To you it is given not only to believe but to suffer*, and so *to bless him* on that behalf. Phil. i. 29. Oh! this love grows in suffering. See Acts v. 41. *They went away rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name*.

Consider, it is but a short while, and the wicked and their scoffs shall vanish; *they shall not be*. This shame will presently be over, this disgrace is of short date, but the glory, and the *Spirit of glory*, are eternal. What though thou shouldst be poor, and defamed, and despised, and be the common mark of scorn and all injuries, yet the end of them all is at hand. This is now thy part, but the scene shall be changed. Kings here,



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real ones, are in the deepest reality but stage kings; but when thou comest to alter the person thou now bearest, here is the odds: thou wast a fool in appearance, and for a moment, but thou shalt be truly a king for ever.

VER. 17. For the time is come, that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God.

THERE is not only perfect equity, but withal a comely proportion and beauty in all the ways of God, had we eyes open to discern them, particularly in this point of the sufferings and afflictions of the church. The apostle here sets it before his brethren, *For the time is come*, &c. In which words, there is, 1*st*. A parallel of the Lord's dealing with his own and with the wicked. 2*d*. A persuasion to due compliance and confidence, on the part of his own, upon that consideration.

The parallel is in the *order* and the *measure* of punishing; and it is so that, for the *order*, it begins at the house of God, and ends upon the ungodly. And that carries with it this great difference in the *measure*, that it passes from the one on whom it begins, and rests on the other on whom it ends, and on whom the full weight of it lies for ever. It is so expressed: *What shall the end be*, &c., which imports, not only that judgment shall overtake them in the end, but that it shall be their end; they shall end in it, and it shall be endless upon them.

*The time is.*] Indeed, the whole time of this present life is so, is the time of suffering and purifying for the church, compassed with enemies who will afflict her, and subject to those impurities which need affliction. The children of God are in their under-age here: all their time they are children, and have their frailties and childish follies; and therefore, though they are not always under the stroke of the rod, for that they were not able to endure, yet they are under the discipline and use of the rod all their time. And whereas the wicked escape till their day of full payment, the children of God are in this life chastised with frequent afflictions. And so, *The time* [ὁ καιρὸς] may here be taken according as the apostle St. Paul uses the same word, Rom. viii. 18, παθήματα τοῦ νῦν καίρου, *The sufferings of this present time.*

But withal, it is true, and appears to be here implied, that there are peculiar set times, which the Lord chooses for the correcting of his church. He hath the days prefixed and written in his *Ephemerides*, hath his days of correcting, wherein he goes round from one church to another. We thought it would never come to us, but we have now found the smart of it.

And here the apostle may probably mean the times of those hot persecutions that were then begun, and continued, though with some intervals for two or three ages. Thus, in the sixth chapter of the Apocalypse, after the *white horse*, immediately follow at his heels, *the red*, and *the black*, and *the pale horse*. And as it was upon the first publishing of the gospel, so usually, upon the restoring of it, or upon remarkable reformations of the church and revivings of religion, follow sharp and searching trials. As the lower cause of this is the rage and malice of Satan, and of the ungodly world acted and stirred by him, against the purity and prevalency of religion, so it is from a higher hand for better ends. The Lord will discover the multitudes of hypocrites and empty professors, who will at such a time readily abound, when religion is upon an advancing way, and the stream of it runs strong. Now, by the counter-current of troubles, such fall back and are carried away. And the truth of grace, in the hearts of believers, receives advantage from these hazards and sufferings; they are put to fasten their hold the better on Christ, to seek more experience of the real and sweet consolations of the gospel, which may uphold them against the counter-blasts of suffering. Thus is religion made a more real and solid thing in the hearts of true believers: they are entered to that way of receiving Christ and his cross together, that they may see their bargain, and not think it a surprise.

*Judgment.*] Though all her sufferings are not such, yet commonly, there is that unsuitable and unwary walking among Christians, that even their sufferings for the cause of God, though unjust from men, are from God just punishments of their miscarriages toward him, in their former ways; their self-pleasing and earthliness having too high a relish for the delights of this world, forgetting their inheritance and home, and conforming themselves to the world, walking too much like it.

*Must begin.*] The church of God is punished, while the wicked are free and flourish in the world, possibly all their days; or, if judgment reach them here, yet it is later; it *begins at the house of God*. [1.] This holds in those who profess his name, and are of the visible church, compared with them who are without the pale of it, and are its avowed enemies. [2.] In those who profess a desire of a more religious and holy course of life within the church, compared with the profane multitude. [3.] In those who are indeed more spiritual and holy, and come nearer unto God, compared with others who fall short of that measure. In all these respects it holds, that the Lord doth more readily exercise them with afflictions, and correct their wanderings, than any others.

And this truly is most reasonable; and the reason lies in the very name given to the church, *the house of God*. For,

1. There is *equity* in such a proceeding. The sins of the church have their peculiar aggravations, which fall not upon others. That which is simply a sin in strangers to God, is, in his people, the breach of a known and received law, and a law daily unfolded and set before them: yea, it is against their

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oath of allegiance; it is perfidy and breach of covenant, committed both against the clearest light, and the strictest bonds, and the highest mercies. And still the more particular the profession of his name and the testimonies of his love, these make sin the more sinful, and the punishment of it the more reasonable. The sins of the church are all twice dipped, *Dibapha, have a double dye.* Isa. i. 18. They are breaches of the law, and they are, besides, ungrateful and disloyal breaches of promise.

2. As there is unquestionable *equity*, so there is an evident *congruity* in this. God is ruler of all the world, but particularly of his church, here called *his house*, wherein he hath a special residence and presence; and therefore it is most suitable that there he be specially observed and obeyed, and if disobeyed, that he take notice of it and punish it; that he suffer not himself to be dishonored to his face by those of his own house. And therefore, whosoever escapes, his own shall not. *You only have I known, of all the families of the earth: therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities.* Amos iii. 2. It is fit that he who righteously judges and rules all nations, should make his justice most evident and exemplary in his own house, where it may best be remarked, and where it will best appear how impartial he is in punishing sin. So a king (as the psalmist, Psalm ci. 2), that he may rule the land well, makes his *own house* exemplary. It is, you know, one special qualification of a bishop and pastor, to be *one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?* 1 Tim. iii. 4. Now this, therefore, more eminently appears in the Supreme Lord of the church: he rules it as his own house, and therefore when he finds disobedience there, he will first punish that. So he clears himself, and the wicked world being afterward punished, their mouths are stopped with the preceding punishment of the church. Will he not spare his own? Yea, they shall be first scourged. *What then shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel.*

And indeed, the purity of his nature, if it be everywhere contrary to all sinful impurity, can not but most appear in his peculiar dwelling-house; that he will especially have neat and clean. If he hate sin all the world over, where it is nearest to him he hates it most, and testifies his hatred of it most: he will not endure it in his presence. As cleanly, neat persons can not well look upon anything that is nasty, much less will they suffer it to come near them or touch them, or to continue in their presence in the house where they dwell: so the Lord, *who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, will not abide it within his own doors; and the nearer any come to him, the less can he endure any unholiness or sinful pollution in them. *He will be sanctified in all that come nigh him*, Lev. x. 3; so especially in his ministers. Oh, how pure ought they to be, and how provoking and hateful to him are their impurities! Therefore, in that commission to the destroyers, Ezek. ix. 6, to which place the apostle here may have some reference, *Go*, says he, *slay the old and the young, and begin at my sanctuary.* They were the persons who had polluted his worship, and there the first stroke lighted. And in a spiritual sense, because all his people are his own elect priesthood, and should be *holiness to the Lord;* when they are not really so, and do not sanctify him in their walking, he sanctifies himself, and declares his holiness in his judgments on them.

3. There is mercy in this dispensation too; even under the habit of judgment, love walks secretly and works. So loving and so wise a Father will not undo his children by sparing the rod, but *because he loves, rebukes, and chastens.* See Heb. xii. 6. Prov. iii. 11. Apoc. iii. 19. His church is his house; therefore that he may delight in it, and take pleasure to dwell in it, and make it happy with his presence, he will have it often washed and made clean, and the filth and rubbish scoured and purged out of it; this argues his gracious purpose of abiding in it.

And as he doth it, that he may delight in his people, so he doth it that they may delight in him, and in him alone. He imbitters the breast of the world, to wean them; makes the world hate them, that they may the more easily hate it; suffers them not to settle upon it, and fall into a complacency with it, but makes it unpleasant to them by many and sharp afflictions, that they may with the more willingness come off and be untied from it, and that they may remember home the more, and seek their comforts above; that finding so little below, they may turn unto him, and delight themselves in communion with him. That the sweet incense of their prayers may ascend the more thick, he kindles those fires of trials to them. For though it should not be so, yet so it is, that in times of ease they would easily grow remiss and formal in that duty.

He is gracious and wise, knows what he does with them, and *the thoughts he thinks toward them.* Jer. xxix. 11. All is for their advantage, for the purifying of their iniquities. Isa. xxvii. 9. He purges out their impatience, and earthliness, and self-will, and carnal security; and thus refines them for vessels of honor. We see in a jeweller's shop, that as there are pearls and diamonds, and other precious stones, so there are files, cutting instruments, and many sharp tools, for their polishing; and while they are in the workhouse, they are continual neighbors to them, and often come under them. The church is God's jewellery, his work-house, where his jewels are a polishing for his palace and house; and those he especially esteems and means to

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make most resplendent, he hath oftenest his tools upon.

Thus observe it, as it is the church compared to other societies, so is it in a congregation or family; if there be one more diligently seeking after God than the rest, he shall be liable to meet with more trials, and be oftener under afflictions than any of the company, either under contempt and scorn, or poverty and sickness, or some one pressure or other, outward or inward. And those inward trials are the nearest and sharpest which the world sees least, and yet the soul feels most. And yet all these, both outward and inward, have love, unspeakable love in them all, being designed to purge and polish them, and, by the increasing of grace, to fit them for glory.

*Inf.* 1. Let us not be so foolish as to promise ourselves impunity on account of our relation to God as his church in covenant with him. If once we thought so, surely our experience hath undeceived us. And let not what we have suffered harden us, as if the worst were past. We may rather fear it is but a pledge and beginning of sharper judgment. Why do we not consider our unhumbled and unpurified condition, and tremble before the Lord? Would we save him a labor, he would take it well. Let us purify our souls, that he may not be put to further purifying by new judgments. Were we busy reading our present condition, we should see very legible foresigns of further judgments; as for instance: [1.] The Lord taking away his eminent and worthy servants, who are as the very pillars of the public peace and welfare, and taking away counsel, and courage, and union, from the rest; forsaking us in our meetings, and leaving us in the dark to grope and rush one upon another. [2.] The dissensions and jarrings in the state and church, are likely, from imagination, to bring it to a reality. These unnatural burnings threaten new fires of public judgments to be kindled among us. [3.] That general despising of the gospel and abounding of profaneness throughout the land, not yet purged, but as our great sin remaining in us, calls for more fire and more boiling. [4.] The general coldness and deadness of spirit; the want of zeal for God, and of the communion of saints, that mutual stirring up of one another to holiness; and, which is the source of all, the restraining of prayer, a frozen benumbedness in that so necessary work, that preventer of judgments, that binder of the hands of God from punishments, and opener of them for the pouring forth of mercies.—Oh! this is a sad condition in itself, though it portended no further judgment, the Lord hiding himself, and the spirit of zeal and prayer withdrawn, and scarcely any lamenting it, or so much as perceiving it! Where are our days either of solemn prayer or praises, as if there were cause for neither! And yet, there is a clear cause for both. Truly, my brethren, we have need, if ever we had, to bestir ourselves. Are not these kingdoms, at this present, brought to the extreme point of their highest hazard? And yet, who lays it to heart.

*Inf.* 2. Learn to put a right construction on all God's dealings with his church, and with thy soul. With regard to his church, there may be a time wherein thou shalt see it not only tossed, but, to thy thinking, covered and swallowed up with tears: but wait a little, it shall arrive safe. This is a common stumbling-stone, but walk by the light of the word, and the eye of faith looking on it, and thou shalt pass by and not stumble at it. The church mourns, and Babylon sings—*sits as a queen;* but for how long? She shall *come down and sit in the dust;* and Sion shall be glorious, *and put on her beautiful garments,* while Babylon shall not look for another revolution to raise her again: no, she shall never rise: *And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great mill-stone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence, shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.* Rev. xviii. 21.

Be not hasty: take God's work together, and do not judge of it by parcels. It is indeed all wisdom and righteousness; but we shall best discern the beauty of it, when we look on it in the frame, when it shall be fully completed and finished, and our eyes enlightened to take a fuller and clearer view of it than we can have here. Oh, what wonder, what endless wondering will it then command!

We read of Joseph hated, and sold, and imprisoned, and all most unjustly, yet because, within a leaf or two, we find him freed and exalted, and his brethren coming as supplicants to him, we are satisfied. But when we look on things which are for the present cloudy and dark, our short-sighted, hasty spirits can not learn to wait a little, till we see the other side, and what end the Lord makes. We see *judgment beginning at the house of God,* and this perplexes us while we consider not the rest, *What shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel?* God begins the judgment on his church for a little time, that it may end and rest upon his enemies for ever. And indeed, he leaves the wicked last in the punishment, that he may make use of them for the punishment of his church. They are *his rod,* Isa. x. 5; but when he hath done that work with them, they are *broken and burnt,* and that, when they are at the height of their insolence and boasting, not knowing what hand moves them, and smites his people with them for a while, *till the day of their consuming come,* ver. 16, 24, 25. Let the vile enemy that hath shed our blood and insulted over us, rejoice in their present impunity, and in men's procuring of it, and pleading for it;* there is another hand whence we

* I am ready to believe this refers to the escape of many who had deserved the severest punishments, for their part in the grand Irish rebellion, but were screened by the favor of some great men in the reign of King Charles II.—[Dr. Doddridge.]

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may look for justice. And though it may be, that the judgment begun at us, is not yet ended, and that we may yet further, and that justly, find them our scourge, yet, certainly, we may and ought to look beyond that, unto the end of the Lord's work, which shall be the ruin of his enemies, and the peace of his people, and the glory of his name.

*Of them that obey not the gospel.*] The end of all the ungodly is terrible, but especially the end of such as heard the gospel, and have not received and obeyed it.

The word ἀπειθούντων hath in it both unbelief and disobedience; and these are inseparable. Unbelief is the grand point of disobedience in itself, and the spring of all other disobedience: and the pity is, that men will not believe it to be thus.

They think it an easy and a common thing to believe. Who doth not believe? Oh, but rather, who does? *Who hath believed our report?* Were our own misery, and the happiness that is in Christ believed, were the riches of Christ and the love of Christ believed, would not this persuade men to forsake their sins and the world, in order to embrace him?

But men run away with an extraordinary fancy of believing, and do not deeply consider what news the gospel brings, and how much it concerns them. Sometimes, it may be, they have a sudden thought of it, and they think, I will think on it better at some other time. But when comes that time? One business steps in after another, and shuffles it out. Men are not at leisure to be saved.

Observe the phrase, *the gospel of God.* It is his embassy of peace to men, the riches of his mercy and free love opened and set forth, not simply to be looked upon, but laid hold on: the glorious holy God declaring his design of agreement with man, in his own Son, his blood streaming forth in it to wash away uncleanness. And yet this gospel is not obeyed! Surely, the conditions of it must be very hard, and the commands intolerably grievous, that are not hearkened to. Why, judge you if they be. The great command is, to receive that salvation; and the other is this, to love that Savior; and there is no more. Perfect obedience is not now the thing; and the obedience which is required, that love makes sweet and easy to us, and acceptable to him. This is proclaimed to all who hear the gospel, but the greatest part refuse it: they love themselves, and their lusts, and this present world, and will not change, and so they perish!

They perish—What is that? What is their end? I will answer that but as the apostle doth, and that is even by asking the question over again, *What shall be their end?*

There is no speaking of it; a curtain is drawn: silent wonder expresses it best, telling that it can not be expressed. How then shall it be endured? It is true, that there be resemblances used in Scripture, giving us some glance of it. We hear of a *burning lake, a fire that is not quenched, and a worm that dies not.* Isa. lxvi. 24; Mark ix. 44; Rev. xxi. 8. But these are but shadows to the real misery of them that obey not the gospel. Oh, to be filled with the wrath of God, the ever-living God, for ever! What words or thoughts can reach it? Oh, eternity, eternity! Oh, that we did believe it.

This same parallel of the Lord's dealing with the righteous and the wicked, is continued in the following verse, in other terms for the clearer expression, and deeper impression of it.

VER. 18. And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear.

IT is true, then, that they are *scarcely saved:* even they who endeavor to walk uprightly in the ways of God, that is, *the righteous,* they are *scarcely saved.* This imports not any uncertainty or hazard in the thing itself as to the end, in respect of the purpose and performance of God, but only, the great difficulties and hard encounters in the way; that they go through so many temptations and tribulations, so many *fightings without, and fears within.* The Christian is so simple and weak, and his enemies are so crafty and powerful, the oppositions of the wicked world, their hatreds, and scorns, and molestations, the sleights and violence of Satan, and, worst of all, the strength of his own corruptions; and by reason of abounding corruption, there is such frequent, almost continual, need of purifying by afflictions and trials, that he has need to be still under physic, and is of necessity at sometimes drained and brought so low, that there is scarcely strength or life remaining in him.

And, truly, all outward difficulties would be but matter of ease, would be as nothing, were it not for the incumbrance of lusts and corruptions within. Were a man to meet disgraces and sufferings for Christ, how easily would he go through them, yea, and rejoice in them, were he rid of the fretting impatience, the pride, and self-love, of his own carnal heart! These clog and trouble him worst, and he can not shake them off, nor prevail against them without much pains, many prayers and tears; and many times, after much wrestling, he scarcely finds that he hath gained any ground: yea, sometimes he is foiled and cast down by them.

And so, in all other duties, such a fighting and continual combat, with a revolting, backsliding heart, the flesh still pulling and dragging downward! When he would mount up, he finds himself as a bird with a stone tied to its foot; he hath wings that flutter to be upward, but is pressed down by the weight fastened to him. What struggling with wanderings and deadness in hearing, and reading, and prayer! And what is most grievous is, that, by their unwary walking, and the prevailing of some corruption, they grieve the

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Spirit of God, and provoke him to hide his face, and withdraw his comforts. How much pain to attain anything, any particular grace of humility, or meekness, or self-denial; and if anything be attained, how hard to keep and maintain it against the contrary party! How often are they driven back to their old point. If they do but cease from striving a little, they are carried back by the stream. And what returns of doubtings and misbelief, after they thought they were got somewhat above them, insomuch that sometimes they are at the point of giving over, and thinking it will never be for them. And yet, through all these they are brought safe home. There is another strength than theirs which bears them up, and brings them through. But these things, and many more of this nature, argue the difficulty of their course, and that it is not so easy a thing to come to heaven as most imagine it.

*Inference.* Thou that findest so little stop and conflict in it, who goest thy round of external duties, and all is well, art no more troubled; thou hast need to inquire, after a long time spent in this way, am I right? Have I not yet to begin? Surely, this looks not like the way to heaven, as it is described in the Scripture: it is too smooth and easy to be right.

And if the way of the righteous be so hard, then how hard shall be the end of the ungodly sinner that walks in sin with delight! It were strange if they should be at such pains, and with great difficulty attain their end, and he should come in among them in the end; they were fools indeed. True, if it were so. But what if it be not so? Then the wicked man is the fool, and shall find that he is, when he shall not be able to *stand in judgment.* Where shall he appear, when to the end he might not appear, he would be glad to be smothered under the weight of the hills and mountains, if they could shelter him from appearing?

And what is the aim of all this which we have spoken, or can speak, on this subject, but that ye may be moved to take into deeper thoughts the concernment of your immortal souls? Oh, that you would be persuaded! Oh, that you would betake yourselves to Jesus Christ, and seek salvation in him! Seek to be covered with his righteousness, and to be led by his Spirit in the ways of righteousness. That will seal to you the happy certainty of the end, and overcome for you all the difficulties of the way. What is the gospel of Christ preached for? What was the blood of Christ shed for? Was it not, that by receiving him we might escape condemnation? Nay, this drew him from heaven: *He came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly.* John x. 10.

VER. 19. Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

NOTHING doth so establish the mind amid the rollings and turbulency of present things, as both a look above them, and a look beyond them; above them to the steady and good Hand by which they are ruled, and beyond them to the sweet and beautiful end to which, by that Hand, they shall be brought. This the apostle lays here as the foundation of that patience and peace in troubles, wherewith he would have his brethren furnished. And thus he closes this chapter in these words: *Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator.*

The words contain the true principle of Christian patience and tranquillity of mind in the sufferings of this life, expressing both wherein it consists, and what are the grounds of it.

I. It lies in this, *committing the soul unto God.* The word ἐν ἀγαθοποιΐᾳ which is added, is a true qualification of this, that it be *in well doing*, according to the preceding doctrine, which the apostle gives clearly and largely, ver. 15, 16. If men would have inward peace amid outward trouble, they must walk by the rule of peace, and keep strictly to it. If you would commit your soul to the keeping of God, know that he is a holy God, and an unholy soul that walks in any way of wickedness, whether known or secret, is no fit commodity to put into his pure hand to keep. Therefore, as you would have this confidence to give your holy God the keeping of your soul, and that he may accept of it, and take it off your hand, beware of wilful pollutions and unholy ways. Walk so as you may not discredit your Protector, and move him to be ashamed of you, and disclaim you. Shall it be said that you live under his shelter, and yet walk inordinately? As this can not well be, you can not well believe it to be. Loose ways will loosen your hold of him, and confidence in him. You will be driven to question your interest, and to think, surely I do but delude myself: can I be under his safeguard, and yet follow the course of the world, and my corrupt heart? Certainly, let who will be so, he will not be a guardian and patron of wickedness. No, *he is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with him.* Psalm v. 4. If thou give thy soul to him to keep, upon the terms of liberty to sin, he will turn it out of his doors, and remit it back to thee to look to as thou wilt thyself. Yea, in the ways of sin, thou dost indeed steal it back, and carriest it out from him; thou puttest thyself out of the compass of his defence, goest without the trenches, and art, at thine own hazard, exposed to armies of mischiefs and miseries.

*Inference.* This, then, is primarily to be looked to: you that would have safety in God in evil times, beware of evil ways; for in these it can not be. If you will be safe in him, you must stay with him, and in all your ways, keep within him *as your fortress.* Now, in the ways of sin you run out from him.

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Hence it is we have so little established confidence in God in times of trial. We take ways of our own, and will be gadding, and so we are surprised and taken, as they that are often venturing out into the enemy's reach, and can not stay within the walls. It is no idle repetition, Psalm xci. 1: *He that dwelleth in the secret places of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.* He that wanders not, but stays there, shall find himself there hidden from danger. They that rove out from God in their ways, are disquieted and tossed with fears; this is the *fruit of their own ways;* but the soul that is indeed given to him to keep, keeps near him.

Study pure and holy walking, if you would have your confidence firm, and have boldness and joy in God. You will find that a little sin will shake your trust, and disturb your peace, more than the greatest sufferings: yea, in those sufferings, your assurance and joy in God will grow and abound most if sin be kept out. That is the trouble-feast that disquiets the conscience, which, while it continues good, is a *continual feast.* So much sin as gets in, so much peace will go out. Afflictions can not break in upon it to break it, but sin doth. All the winds which blow about the earth from all points, stir it not; only that within the bowels of it makes the earthquake.

I do not mean that for infirmities a Christian ought to be discouraged. But take heed of walking in any way of sin, for that will unsettle thy confidence. Innocency and holy walking make the soul of a sound constitution, which the counterblasts of affliction wear not out, nor alter. Sin makes it so sickly and crazy, that it can endure nothing. Therefore, study to keep your consciences pure, and they shall be peaceable, yea, in the worst of times commonly most peaceable and best furnished with spiritual confidence and comfort.

*Commit the keeping of their souls.*] The Lord is an entire protector. He keeps the bodies, yea, all that belongs to the believer, and, as much as is good for him, makes all safe, *keeps all his bones, not one of them is broken,* Psal. xxxiv. 18; yea, says our Savior, *The very hairs of your head are numbered,* Matt. x. 30. But that which, as in the believer's account, and in God's account, so, certainly in itself is most precious, is principally committed and received into his keeping, *their souls.* They would most gladly be secured in that here, and that shall be safe in the midst of all hazards. Their chief concern is, that, whatsoever be lost, this may not: this is the jewel, and therefore, the prime care is of this. If the soul be safe, all is well; it is riches enough. *What shall it profit a man, though he gain the whole world,* says our Savior, *and lose his own soul?* Mark viii. 36. And so, what shall it disprofit a man, though he lose the whole world, if he gain his soul? Nothing at all.

When times of trial come, oh, what a bustle to hide this and that; to flee, and carry away and make safe that which is but trash and rubbish to the precious soul; but how few thoughts of that! Were we in our wits, that would be all at all times, not only in trouble, but in days of peace. Oh, how shall I make sure about my soul? Let all go as it may, can I but be secured and persuaded in that point, I desire no more.

Now, the way is this, *commit them to God:* this many say, but few do. Give them into his hand, *lay them up* there (so the word is), and they are safe, and may be quiet and composed.

*In patience possess your souls,* says our Savior, Luke xxiv. 19. Impatient, fretting souls are out of themselves; their owners do not possess them. Now, the way to possess them ourselves in patience, is, thus to commit them to him in confidence; for then only we possess them, when he keeps them. They are easily disquieted and shaken in pieces while they are in our own hands, but in his hand, they are above the reach of dangers and fears.

*Inference.* Learn hence, what is the proper act of faith: it rolls the soul over on God, ventures it in his hand, and rests satisfied concerning it, being there. And there is no way but this, to be quiet within, to be impregnable and immovable in all assaults, and fixed in all changes, believing in his free love. Therefore, be persuaded to resolve on that;—not doubting and disputing, "Whether shall I believe or not? Shall I think he will suffer me to lay my soul upon him to keep, so unworthy, so guilty a soul? Were it not presumption!"—Oh, what sayest thou? Why dost thou thus dishonor him, and disquiet thyself? If thou hast a purpose to walk in any way of wickedness, indeed thou art not for him; yea, thou comest not near him to give him thy soul. But wouldst thou have it delivered from sin, rather than from trouble, yea, rather than from hell? Is that the chief safety thou seekest, to be kept from iniquity, from thine own iniquity, thy beloved sins? Dost thou desire to dwell in him, and walk with him? Then, whatsoever be thy guiltiness and unworthiness, come forward, and give him thy soul to keep. If he should seem to refuse it, press it on him. If he stretch not forth his hand, lay it down at his foot, and leave it there, and resolve not to take it back. Say, "Lord, thou hast made us these souls, thou callest for them again to be committed to thee; here is one. It is unworthy, but what soul is not so? It is most unworthy, but therein will the riches of thy grace appear most in receiving it." And thus leave it with him, and know, he will make thee a good account of it. Now, should you lose goods, or credit, or friends, or life itself, it imports not; the main concern is sure, if so be thy soul is out of hazard. *I suffer these things for the gospel,* says the apostle: *nevertheless, I am not ashamed*—Why?—*for I know whom I have trusted, and am per-*

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*suaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.* 2 Tim. i. 12.

II. The *ground* of this confidence, is in these two things, the *ability* and the *fidelity* of him in whom we trust. There is much in a persuasion of the power of God. Though few think they question that, there is in us secret, undiscovered unbelief, even in that point. Therefore the Lord so often makes mention of it in the prophets. See Isa. l. 3, &c. And, on this point, the Apostle Paul is particularly express: *I am persuaded that he is able to keep*, &c. So this apostle: *Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.* Chap. i. 5. This is very needful to be considered, in regard of the many and great oppositions, and dangers, and powerful enemies, that seek after our souls; *He is able to keep them, for he is stronger than all, and none can pluck them out of his hand*, says our Savior. John x. 29. This the apostle here implies in that word, *Creator:* if he was able to give them being, surely he is able to keep them from perishing. This relation of a Creator implies likewise a benign propension and good will to the works of his hands; if he gave them us at first, when once they were not, forming them out of nothing, will he not give us them again, being put into his hand for safety?

And as he is powerful, he is no less faithful, *a faithful Creator.* Truth itself. Those who believe on him, he never deceives or disappoints. Well might St. Paul say, *I know whom I have trusted.* Oh, the advantage of faith! It engages the truth and the power of God: his royal word and honor lie upon it, to preserve the soul that faith gives him in keeping. If he remain able and faithful to perform his word, that soul shall not perish.

There be in the words, other two grounds of quietness of spirit in sufferings. [I.] It is according to the will of God. The believing soul, subjected and levelled to that will, complying with his good pleasure in all, can not have a more powerful persuasive than this, that all is ordered by his will. This settled in the heart would settle it much, and make it even in all things; not only to know, but wisely and deeply to consider, that it is thus, that all is measured in heaven, every drachm of thy troubles weighed by that skilful hand, which doth all things by weight, number, and measure.

And then, consider him as thy God and Father, who hath taken special charge of thee, and of thy soul: thou hast given it to him, and he hath received it. And, upon this consideration, study to follow his will in all, to have no will but his. This is thy duty, and thy wisdom. Nothing is gained by spurning and struggling, but to hurt and vex thyself; but by complying, all is gained—sweet peace. It is the very secret, the mystery of solid peace within, to resign all to his will, to be disposed of at his pleasure, without the least contrary thought. And thus, like two-faced pictures, those sufferings and troubles, and whatsoever else, while beheld on the one side as painful to the flesh, hath an unpleasant visage, yet, go about a little, and look upon it as thy Father's will, and then it is smiling, beautiful, and lovely. This I would recommend to you, not only for temporals, as easier there, but in spiritual things, your comforts and sensible enlargements, to love all that he does. It is the sum of Christianity, to have thy will crucified, and the will of thy Lord thy only desire. Whether joy or sorrow, sickness or health, life or death, in all, in all, *Thy will be done.*

The other ground of quietness is contained in the first word, which looks back on the foregoing discourse, *Wherefore*—what? Seeing that your reproachings and sufferings are not endless, yea, that they are short, they shall end, quickly end, and end in glory, be not troubled about them, overlook them. The eye of faith will do it. A moment gone, and what are they? This is the great cause of our disquietness in present troubles and griefs; we forget their end. We are affected by our condition in this present life, as if it were all, and it is nothing. Oh, how quickly shall all the enjoyments, and all the sufferings of this life pass away, and be as if they had not been!

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## CHAPTER V.

VER 1. The elders which are among you, I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.

THE church of Christ being one body, is interested in the condition and carriage of each particular Christian, as a part of it, but more especially in respect to those who are more eminent and organic parts of it. Therefore, the apostle, after many excellent directions given to all his Christian brethren to whom he writes, doth most reasonably and fitly add this express exhortation to those who had the oversight and charge of the rest: *The elders which are among you*, &c.

The words contain a particular definition of the persons exhorted and the persons exhorting.

I. The persons exhorted: *The elders among you. Elders* here, as in other places, is a name, not of age, but of office: yet the office is named by that age which is, or ought to be, most suitably qualified for it, importing, that men, though not aged, yet, if called to that office, should be noted for such wisdom and gravity of mind and carriage, as may give that authority, and command that respect, which is requisite for persons in their calling; not *novices*, as St. Paul speaks: not

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as a light bladder, being easily blown up, as young unstable minds are; but such as young Timothy was in humility and diligence, as the apostle testifies of him, Phil. ii. 20, and as he further exhorts him to be, 1 Tim. iv. 12: *Let no man despise thy youth, but be an example of believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in purity.*

The name of *elders* indifferently signifies either age or their calling: and the name of *ruling elders* sometimes denotes civil rulers, sometimes pastors of the church; as, among the Jews, both offices often met in the same person. Here, it appears that pastors are meant, as the exhortation, of *feeding the flock*, evidences; which though it sometimes signifies *ruling*, and here may comprise it, yet is chiefly by doctrine. And then the title given to Christ, in the encouragement which is added, confirms this interpretation: *The Chief Shepherd.*

A due frame of spirit and carriage in the elders, particularly the apostles of the church, is a thing of prime concern for the good of it. It is one of the heaviest threatenings, when the Lord declares, that he will give a rebellious people such teachers and prophets as they deserved, and indeed desired: *If there be a man to prophesy of wine and strong drink, such a one shall be a prophet*, says he to that people. Mic. ii. 11. And, on the other side, among the sweetest promises of mercy, this is not the least, to be furnished with plenty of faithful teachers. Though profane men make no reckoning of it, yet, were it in the hardest times, they who know the Lord will account of it as he doth, a sweet allay of all sufferings and hardship: *Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers.* Isa. xxx. 20. now rich a promise is that, Jer. iii. 15: *I will give you pastors according to my own heart.*

This promise is to be pressed and sued for by earnest prayer. Were people much in this duty, pastors would find the benefit of it, and so the people themselves would receive back their prayers, with much gain, into their own bosom: they would have the returned benefit of it, as the vapors that go up from below fall down upon the earth again in sweet showers and make it fruitful. Thus, went there many prayers up for pastors, their doctrine would *drop as rain, and distil as dew*, (Deut. xxx. 2), and the sweet influence of it would make fruitful the valleys, humble hearts receiving it. And, at this time, it is very needful that the Lord be much importuned for the continuance and increase of his favor in this his church. As they who have power should be more careful of those due means which, in schools of learning, or otherwise, are needful for qualifying men for this service; so, all in general, both people and pastors, and such as are offering themselves to that service, should chiefly beg from the higher academy, that teaching, abundance of that Spirit promised to those employed in that work, that might make them *able ministers of the New Testament.*

Oh! it is an inestimable blessing, to have the saving light of the gospel shining clear in the faithful and powerful ministry of it. They thought so, who said of their worthy teacher, they had rather for them, that the sun should not shine, than that he should not teach. *Satius solem non lucere, quam Chrysostomum non docere.*

2. The person exhorting: *I, a co-presbyter* or *fellow-elder* with you. The duty of mutual exhortation lies on Christians at large, though it be little known among the greatest part; but truly, pastors should be, as in other duties, so particularly in this, eminent and exemplary in their intercourse and converse, saying often one to another, Oh! let us remember to what we are called; to how high and heavy a charge; to what holiness and diligence; how great is the hazard of our miscarriage, and how great the reward of our fidelity. They should be often whetting and sharpening one another by these weighty and holy considerations.

*And a witness of the sufferings of Christ.* He did indeed give witness to Christ, by suffering for him the hatred and persecutions of the world in the publishing of the gospel, and so was a witness and martyr before the time that he was put to death: and this I exclude not. But that which is more particularly here intended is, his certain knowledge of the sufferings of Christ, in his own person, as an eyewitness of them, and upon that knowledge, a publisher of them. Luke xxiv. 48. And thus these two suit with the two motives urged, to bear home the exhortation: the one couched in that expression, *the flock of God* (ver. 2), his purchase with those his sufferings whereof I was an eyewitness; the other motive, in the words, *a crown of glory*, &c., ver. 4. As if he had said, I may speak the more confidently of that, for I am one of those who have a real interest in it, and a firm belief of it, *a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.* And these, indeed, are the things which give weight to a man's words, make them powerful and pressing.

*A witness of the sufferings of Christ.* The apostles had a singular advantage in this, who were αὐτόπται, *eyewitnesses;* and St. Paul, who wanted that, had it supplied by a vision of Christ, in his conversion. A spiritual view of Christ crucified, is generally, I will not say absolutely, necessary to make a minister of Christ, but certainly very requisite for the due witnessing of him, and the displaying of the excellency and virtue of his sufferings, and for so preaching the gospel that there shall need no other crucifix;* after so clear and lively a way, as that it may in some measure suit the

* Alluding to the custom of many popish preachers to carry a little crucifix into the pulpit with them.—DR. DODDRIDGE.



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apostle's word, Gal. iii. 1: *Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you.*

Men commonly read, and hear, and may possibly preach, of the sufferings of Christ as a common story, and in that way it may a little move a man, and wring tears from his eyes. But faith hath another kind of sight of them, and so works another kind of affections; and without that, the very eyesight of them had availed the apostles nothing; for how many saw him suffer as they did, who reviled, or at least despised him! But by the eye of faith to see the only begotten Son of God, as *stricken and smitten of God, bearing our sorrows*, and *wounded for our transgressions*, Jesus Christ, *the righteous*, reckoned among the unrighteous and malefactors; to see him stripped naked, and scourged, and buffeted, and nailed, and dying; and all for us; this is the thing that will bind upon us most strongly all the duties of Christianity and of our particular callings, and best enable us, according to our callings, to bind them upon others. But our slender view of these things occasions a light sense of them, and that, cold incitements to answerable duty. Certainly, deep impressions would cause lively expressions.

Would we willingly stir up our own hearts and one another to holy diligence in our station, study more thoroughly Christ as suffering and dying: that is the very life of the gospel and of our souls; it is all we have to learn, and all we have to teach and press on you. *I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified*, to make Christ's cross the sum of all my learning.

*A partaker of the glory to be revealed.*] As he was a witness of those sufferings, so a partaker of the glory purchased by those sufferings; and therefore, as one insighted and interested in what he speaks, the apostle might fitly speak of that peculiar duty to which those sufferings and that glory do peculiarly persuade. This is the only way of speaking of those things, not as a discourser or contemplative student, but as *a partaker* of them. There is another force in a pastor's exhortation either to his people or his brethren, who brings his message written upon his own heart; who speaks of the guilt of sin, and the sufferings of Christ for it, as particularly feeling his own guilt, and looking on those sufferings as taking it away; speaks of free grace as one who either hath drunken of the refreshing streams of it, at least is earnestly thirsting after it; speaks of the love of Christ, from a heart kindled with it, and of the glory to come, as one who looks to be a sharer in it, and longs earnestly for it, as one who hath all his joy and content laid up in the hopes of it.

And thus with respect to Christians conversing with each other in their mutual exhortings and comfortings, all is cold and dead that flows not from some inward persuasion and experimental knowledge of Divine things But that gives an edge and a sweetness to Christian conference: to be speaking of Jesus Christ, not only as a King and as a Redeemer, but as *their* King, and *their* Redeemer, in David's style, *My King and my God*, and of his sufferings as theirs, applied by faith, and acquitting them in St. Paul's style, *Who loved me and gave himself for me;* to be speaking of the glory to come as *their* inheritance, that of which they are *partakers*, their home; as strangers meeting together abroad, in some foreign country, delight to speak of their own land, their parentage and friends, and the rich patrimony there abiding them. *Peregrinis in terris nulla est jucundior recordatio quam suæ civitatis:* "Nothing is more delightful," says Augustine, "to travellers in distant countries, than the remembrance of their native land." And this ought to be the entertainment of Christians when they meet. Away with trifling, vain discourses; cause all to give place to these refreshing remembrances of our home. Were our hearts much on that rich inheritance above, it would be impossible to refrain our tongues, and to pass on so silent concerning it; to find matter of empty pratings, and be pleased with them, and to have no relish of this. Whither go your hearts? They are out of their way, and abase themselves, that turn so much downward, and are not more above the sun, eying still that blessed land where our purchased inheritance lies.

Oh, seek after more clear knowledge of this glory, and of your interest in it, that your hearts may rejoice in the remembrance of it; that it be not to you as the description of a pleasant land, such as men read of in history, and have no portion in; they like it well, and are pleased with it while they read, be it but some imagined country or commonwealth finely fancied. But know this country of yours to be real, and no device; and seek to know yourselves to be partakers of it.

This confidence depends not upon a singular revelation, but on the power of faith, and the light of the Spirit of God, which clears to his children the things that he hath freely given them; though some of them at times, some, it may be, all, or most of their time, do want it, God so disposing it, that they scarcely clearly see their right, till they be in possession; see not their heaven and home, till they arrive at it, or are hard upon it. Yet, truly, this we may and ought to seek after in humility and submission, that we may have the *pledge and earnest of our inheritance;* not so much for the comfort within us (though that is allowed), as that it may wean our hearts from things below, may raise us to higher and closer communion with God, and enable us more for his service, and excite us more to his praises, even here. What were a Christian without the hope of this glory? As one said, *Tolle religionem, et nullus eris: Take away religion, and you take away the*

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*man.* And, having this hope, what are all things here to him? How poor and despicable the better and worse of this life, and this life itself! How glad is he that it will quickly end! And what were the length of it to him, but a long continuance of his banishment, a long detainment from his home, and how sweet is the message that is sent for him to come home!

*The glory to be revealed!* It is hidden for the present, wholly unknown to the children of this world, and even but little known to the children of God, who are heirs of it. Yea, they who know themselves *partakers of it*, yet know not much what it is; only this, that it is above all they know or can imagine. They may see things which make a great show here; they may hear of more than they see; they may think or imagine more than either they hear or see, or can distinctly conceive of; but still they must think of this glory as beyond it all. If I see pompous shows, or read or hear of them, yet this I say of them, "These are not as my inheritance: oh! it is far beyond them." Yea, does my mind imagine things far beyond them, golden mountains and marble palaces, yet those fall short of my inheritance, for it is such *as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.* Oh, the brightness of that glory when it shall be revealed! How shall they be astonished, who shall see it, and not partake of it! How shall they be filled with everlasting joy, who are heirs of it! Were the heart much upon the thoughts of that glory, what thing is there in this perishing world, which could either lift it up or cast it down?

VER. 2. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.
VER. 3. Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.
VER. 4. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

IN these words we have, I. The duty enjoined: *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight of it.* II. The due qualifications for this duty: *Not by constraint, not for filthy lucre, not as lording it over God's heritage, but willingly, of a ready mind*, and as *being ensamples to the flock.* III. The high advantage to be expected: *An unfading crown of glory, when the Chief Shepherd shall appear.*

I. The duty enjoined. Every step of the way of our salvation hath on it the print of infinite majesty, wisdom, and goodness, and this among the rest: that men, sinful, weak men, are made subservient in that great work of bringing Christ and souls to meet; that by the *foolishness of preaching* (or what appears so to carnal wisdom), the chosen of God are called, and come unto Jesus, and are made *wise unto salvation;* and that the life which is conveyed to them by the *word of life* in the hands of poor men, is by the same means preserved and advanced. This is the standing work of the ministry, and this the thing here bound upon them that are employed in it, *to feed the flock of God that is among them.* Jesus Christ descended to purchase a church, and descended to provide and furnish it, to send down his Spirit: *He ascended and gave gifts*, particularly *for the work of the ministry;* and the great use of them is this, *feed the flock of God.*

Not to say any more of this usual resemblance of a flock, as importing the weakness and tenderness of the church, the continual need she stands in of inspection, and guidance, and defence, and the tender care of the Chief Shepherd for these things, the phrase enforces the present duty of subordinate pastors, their care and diligence in feeding that flock. The due rule of discipline not excluded, the main part of this duty is, by doctrine, the leading them into the wholesome and *green pastures* of saving truths revealed in the gospel, accommodating the way of teaching to their condition and capacity; and with this they should be, as much as possible, particularly acquainted, and suit diligently and prudently their doctrine to it. They are to *feed the sheep*, those more advanced; *to feed the lambs*, the younger and weaker; to have special care of the infirm: to learn of their Master, the great Shepherd, *to bind up that which is broken*, and *strengthen that which is sick* (Ezek. xxxiv. 16)—those that are broken in spirit, that are exercised with temptations; and *gently to lead those that are with young* (Isa. xl. 11)—those in whom the inward work of grace is as in the conception, and they heavy and weak with the weight of it, and the many difficulties and doubtings which are frequent companions and symptoms of that work. Oh, what dexterity and skilfulness, what diligence, and, above all, what affection and bowels of compassion, are needful for this task! *Who is sufficient for these things?* 2 Cor. ii. 16. Who would not faint and give over in it, were not our Lord *the Chief Shepherd;* were not all our sufficiency laid up in his rich fulness, and all our insufficiency covered in his gracious acceptance?

*Inf.* 1. This is the thing we have to eye and study, to set him before us, and to apply ourselves in his strength to this work: not to seek to *please*, but to *feel;* not to delight the ears, but to feed *the souls* of his people; to see that the food be according to his appointment; not empty or subtile notions, not light affected expressions, but wholesome truths, solid food, spiritual things spiritually conceived, and uttered with holy understanding and affection.

And we are to consider this, wherein lies a very pressing motive; it is *the flock of God:* not our own, to use as we please, but committed to our custody by him, who loves highly and prizes his flock, and will require an account of us concerning it; his bought,

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nin purchased flock, and at so dear a rate, as the apostle St. Paul uses this same consideration, in the same argument, Acts xx. 28. *The flock of God that he hath bought with his own blood.* How reasonable is it that we bestow our strength and life on that flock for which our Lord laid down his life; that we be most ready to draw out our spirits for them for whom he let out his blood! *Had I,* says that holy man, Bernard, *some of that blood poured forth on the cross, how carefully would I carry it! And ought I not to be as careful of those souls that it was shed for?* (Advent, Serm. 3.) Oh, that price which was paid for souls, which he, who was no foolish merchant, but wisdom itself, gave for them! Were that price more in our eyes, and more in yours, nothing would so much take either you or us, as the matter of our souls. In this would our desires and endeavors meet, we to use, and you to improve, the means of saving your precious souls.

*Inf.* 2. This mainly concerns us indeed, who have charge of many, especially finding the right cure of one soul within us so hard: but you are concerned in it, each for one. At least remember, this is the end of the ministry, that you may be brought unto Christ; that you may be led to the sweet pastures and pleasant streams of the gospel; that you may be spiritually fed, and may grow in that heavenly life, which is here begun in all those in whom it shall hereafter be perfected.

And as we ought in preaching, so ought you in hearing, to propound this end to yourselves, that you may be spiritually refreshed, and walk in the strength of that divine nourishment. Is this your purpose when you come hither? Inquire of your own hearts, and see what you seek, and what you find, in the public ordinances of God's house. Certainly, the most do not so much as think on the due design of them; they aim at no end, and therefore can attain none; they seek nothing, but sit out their hour, asleep or awake, as it may happen. Or, possibly, some seek to be delighted for the time, as the Lord tells the prophet, to hear, *as it were, a pleasant song,* Ezek. xxxiii. 32, if the gifts and strain of the speaker be anything pleasing. Or, it may be, they seek to gain some new notions, to add somewhat to their stock of knowledge, either that they may be enabled for discourse, or, simply, that they may know. Some, it may be, go a little further; they like to be stirred and moved for the time, and to have some touch of good affection kindled in them: but this lasts but *for a while,* till their other thoughts and affairs get in, and smother and quench it; they are not careful to blow it up and improve it. How many, when they have been a little affected with the word, go out and fall into other discourses and thoughts: they either take in their affairs secretly, as it were under their cloak, and their hearts keep up a conference with them, or, if they forbear this, yet, as soon as they go out, they plunge themselves over head and ears in the world, and lose all which might have any way advantaged their spiritual condition. It may be, one will say, It was a good sermon. Is that to the purpose? But what think you it hath for your praise or dispraise? Instead of saying, Oh, how well was that spoken! you should say, Oh, how hard is repentance! how sweet a thing is faith! how excellent the love of Jesus Christ! That were your best and most real commendation of the sermon, with true benefit to yourselves.

If some of you be careful of repeating, yet, rest not on that; if you be able to speak of it afterward upon occasion, there is somewhat requisite beside and beyond this, to evidence that you are indeed fed by the word, as the flock of God. As when sheep, you know, or other creatures, are nourished by their pasture, the food they have eaten appears not in the same fashion upon them, not in grass, but in growth of flesh and fleece; thus the word would truly appear to feed you, not by the bare discoursing of the word over again, but by the temper of your spirits and actions, if in them you really grow more spiritual, if humility, self-denial, charity, and holiness, are increased in you by it; otherwise, whatsoever literal knowledge you attain, it avails you nothing. Though you heard many sermons every day, and attained further light by them, and carried a plausible profession of religion, yet, unless by the gospel you be transformed into the likeness of Christ, and grace be indeed growing in you, you are but, as one says of the cypress-trees, fair and tall, but fruitless.*

Are you not grieved and afraid, or may no many of you be so, who have lived many years under a fruitful ministry, and yet are as earthly and selfish, as unacquainted with God and his ways, as at the first? Consider this, that as the neglect of souls will lie heavy on unholy or negligent ministers, so, a great many souls are ruining themselves under some measure of fit means, and the slighting of those means will make their condition far heavier than that of many others. Remember our Savior's word: *Wo to thee, Chorazin! Wo unto thee, Bethsaida! It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.* Matt. xi. 21.

II. The discharge of this high task we have here duly qualified: the apostle expresses the upright way to it, both negatively and positively.

There be three evils the apostle would remove from this work, *constrainedness, covetousness,* and *ambition,* as opposed to *willingness, a ready mind,* and an exemplary temper and behavior.

1. We are cautioned against *constrainedness,* μὴ ἀναγκαστῶς; against being driven to the work by necessity, indigence, and want of

* Καλοὶ καὶ ὕψηλοι καὶ κάρπιμον οὐκ ἔχουσι.

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employment or subsistence, as it is with too many, making a trade of it to live by, and setting to it as to any other calling for that end; yea, making it the refuge and forlorn resource of their insufficiency for other callings. And as men are not to undertake the work, driven to it by that hard weapon of necessity, so, being engaged in it, they are not to discharge the duties of it merely upon necessity, because of fines binding to it, or for fear of censure: this is a violent forced motion and can not but be both very unpleasant and unprofitable, as to the proper end and profiting of this work. And as the principle of the motion in this service should not be a compelling necessity of any kind, but true *willingness of heart*, so this willingness should not arise from anything but pure affection to the work.

2. Not *for filthy gain*, but purely from the inward bent of the mind. As it should not be a compulsive or violent motion by necessity from without, so it should not be an artificial motion by weights hung on within—avarice and love of gain. The former were a wheel, driven or drawn, going by force; the latter, little better, as a clock made to go by art, by weights hung to it. But there should be a natural motion, like that of the heavens in their course. A willing obedience to the Spirit of God within, moving a man in every part of this holy work, that is, προθυμῶς, his mind carried to it as the thing he delights in, and in which he loves to be exercised. So, Timothy *careth* γνησίως, not artificially, but naturally. Phil. ii. 20. There may be in a faithful pastor very great reluctance in engaging and adhering to the work, upon a sense of the excellency of it and his own unfitness, and the deep apprehension of those high interests, the glory of God, and the salvation of souls; and yet, he may enter into it, and continue in it, with this *readiness of mind* too; that is, with most single and earnest desires of doing all he can for God, and *the flock of God*; only grieved that there is in him so little suitableness of heart, so little holiness and acquaintance with God for enabling him to it. But might he find that, he were satisfied: and in expectation of that, he goes on, and waits, and is doing according to his little skill and strength, and can not leave it. He is *constrained* indeed, but all the constraint is that of *love to Jesus*, and, for his sake, to the souls he hath bought (2 Cor. v. 14); and all the *gain* sought, is, to *gain* souls to Christ; which is far different from the constraint and the gain here prohibited; yea, this is indeed that very willingness and readiness of mind which is opposed to that other constraint. That is without; this is within: that other gain, is base filthy gain, αἰσχροκέρδος; this noble and divine.

*Inf.* 1. Far be it from us, that necessity and constraint should be the thing that moves us in so holy a work. The Lord whom we serve, sees into the heart, and if he did not that primarily moving, accounts all our diligence nothing. And let not base earth within be the cause of our willingness, but a mind touched with heaven. It is true, the temptations of earth with us, in the matter of gain, are not great; but yet, the heart may cleave to them, as much as if they were much greater, and if it do cleave to them, they shall ruin us; as well a poor stipend and glebe, if the affection be upon them, as a great deanery or bishopric. If a man fall into it, he may drown in a small brook, being under water, as well as in the great ocean. Oh, the little time that remains! Let us join our desires and endeavors in this work, bend our united strength to serve him, that we may have joy in that day of reckoning.

And, indeed, there is nothing moves us aright, nor shall we ever find comfort in this service, unless it be from a cheerful inward *readiness of mind*, and that from the *love of Christ*. Thus said he to his apostle, *Lovest thou me? Then feed my sheep and feed my lambs*. John xxi. 16. Love to Christ begets love to his people's souls, which are so precious to him, and a care of feeding them. He devolves the working of love toward him, upon his flock, for their good, puts them in his room, to receive the benefit of our services, which can not reach him considered in himself: he can receive no other profit from it. Love, much love, gives much unwearied care and much skill in this charge. How sweet is it to him that loves, to bestow himself, *to spend and be spent*, upon his service whom he loves! Jacob, in the same kind of service, endured all that was imposed upon him, and found it light by reason of love, the cold of the nights, and heat of the days: seven years he served for his Rachel, *and they seemed to him but a few days, because he loved her*. Gen. xxix. 20.

Love is the great endowment of a shepherd of Christ's flock. He says not to Peter, Art thou wise, or learned, or eloquent? but, *Lovest thou me? Then feed my sheep*.

3. The third evil is ambition, and that is either in the affecting of undue authority, or the overstrained and tyrannical exercise of due authority, or to seek those dignities that suit not with this charge, which is not *dominium*, but *ministerium*. This temper, therefore, is forbidden, Luke xxii. 25, 26: *The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, but ye shall not be so*. There is a ministerial authority to be used in discipline, and more sharpness with some than with others; but still, lowliness and moderation must be predominant, and not domineering with rigor; rather being examples to the flock in all holiness, and especially in humility and meekness, wherein our Lord Jesus particularly propounds his own example: *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart*.

*But being ensamples.*] Such a pattern as they may stamp and print their spirits and carriage by, and be *followers of you, as you*

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*are of Christ.* And without this there is little or no fruitful preaching. Well says Nazianzen, *Either teach not, or teach by living.* So the apostle exhorteth Timothy to be an *example in word*, but withal *in conversation.* 1 Tim. iv. 12. That is τύπος, the best printed copy.

But this pares off, will some think, all encouragements of learning; leaves no advantage, no respect, or authority. Oh, no: it removes poor worthless encouragements out of the way, to make place for one great one that is sufficient, which all the others together are not.

III. The high advantage: *And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away.* Thou shalt lose nothing by all that restraint from base gain, and vain glory, and worldly power. No matter, let them all go for *a crown:* that weighs them all down; that shall abide for ever. Oh, how far more excellent! *A crown of glory*, pure, unmixed glory, without any ingrediency of pride or sinful vanity, or any danger of it. And a crown *that fadeth not*, ἀμαράντινον, of such a flower as withers not: not a temporary garland of fading flowers, such as all here are. *Wo to the crown of pride*, says the prophet, Isaiah xxviii. 1. Though it be made of flowers growing in a fat valley, yet, their glorious beauty is a fading flower; but this will remain fresh and in perfect lustre to all eternity. May they not well trample on base gain and vain applause, who have this Crown to look to? They that will be content with those, let them be; but *they have their reward*, and it is done and gone, when faithful followers are to receive theirs. Joys of royal pomp, marriages and feasts, how soon do they vanish as a dream! That of Ahasuerus lasted about half a year, but then it ended! And how many since that are gone and forgotten! But this day begins a triumph and a feast, that shall never either end or weary, affording still fresh, ever new delights. All things here, the choicest pleasures, cloy, but satisfy not: those above shall always satisfy, and never cloy, *When the chief Shepherd shall appear.* And that shall shortly be: this moment will shortly be out.

What is to be refused in the way to this crown? All labor is sweet for it. And what is there here to be desired to detain our hearts that we should not most willingly let go, to rest from our labors, and receive our crown? Was ever any king sad to think that the day of his coronation drew nigh? And then, there will be no envy, nor jealousies: all will be kings, each with his crown, each rejoicing in the glory of the others, and all in His, who that day shall be *all in all.*

VER. 5. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves to the elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

SIN hath disordered all; so that nothing is to be found but distemper and crookedness in the condition and ways of men toward God, and toward one another, till a new Spirit come in and rectify all. And very much of that redress lies in this particular grace of *humility*, here recommended by the apostle.

That grace regulates the carriage, 1. Of the *younger* toward the *elder.* 2. Of all men *one to another.* 3. Of all toward God.

1*st.* The *younger are to be subject to the elder.* Which I take so to refer to difference of years, that it hath some aspect likewise to the relation of those that are under the discipline and government of the *elders*, πρεσβύτεροι, who, though not always such in years, ought, however, to suit that name in exemplary gravity and wisdom. It is no seigniory, but a ministry; yet, there is a sacred authority in it, when rightly carried, which both duly challenges, and effectually commands that respect and obedience which is fit for the right order and government of *the house of God.*

The Spirit of Christ in his ministers, is the thing that makes them truly *elders*, and truly *worthy of double honor;* and without that, men may hunt after respect and credit by other parts, and the more they follow it, the faster it flies from them; or, if they catch anything of it, they only grasp a shadow.

*Infer.* Learn, you my brethren, that obedience which is due to the discipline of God's house. This is all we plead for in this point. And know, if you refuse it, and despise the ordinance of God, he will resent the indignity as done to himself. And Oh, that all who have that charge of his house upon them, would mind his interest wholly, and not rise in conceit of their power, but wholly employ and improve it for their Lord and Master, and look on no respect paid to themselves as for its own sake desirable, but only so far as is needful for the profitable discharge and advancement of his work in their hands! What are human differences and regards? How empty a vapor! And whatsoever it is, nothing is lost by single and entire love of our Lord's glory, and total aiming at that. *Them that honor him, he will honor; and those that despise him, shall be despised.* 1 Sam. ii. 30.

But though this [*likewise*] implies, I conceive, somewhat relative to the former subject, yet, certainly, its full scope is more extensive, and directs us, touching the difference of years, to yield the *subjection*, that is, the respect and reverence which is due from younger to elder persons.

The presumption and unbridleness of youth require the pressing and binding on of this rule. And it is of undeniable equity, even written in nature, as due to aged persons. But, doubtless, those reap this due fruit in that season the most, who have ripened it most by the influence of their grave and holy carriage. *The hoary head* is indeed *a crown* —but when?—*when found in the way of*

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*righteousness.* Prov. xvi. 31. There it shines and hath a kind of royalty over youth; otherwise, a graceless old age is a most despicable and lamentable sight. What gains an unholy old man or woman, by their scores of years, but the more scores of guiltiness and misery? And their white hairs speak nothing but ripeness for wrath. Oh! to be as *a tree planted in the house of the Lord, bringing forth fruit in old age.* Psalm xcii. 12, 13. Much experience in the ways of God, and much disdain of the world, and much desire of the love of God, a heavenly temper of mind and frame of life; this is the advantage of many years. But to have seen and felt the more misery, and *heaped up* the more sin, the greater bundle of it, *against the day of wrath*, a woful *treasure* of it, threescore, or threescore and ten years a gathering, and with so much increase every day; no vacation, no dead years, no, not a day wherein it was not growing; how deplorable a case!

A sad reflection, to look back and think, What have I done for God? and to find nothing but such a word of sin committed against him, How much better he who gets home betimes in his youth, if once delivered from sin and death, at one with God, and some way serviceable to him, or desiring to be so, and who hath a quick voyage, having lived much in a little time!

2. *All of you be subject one to another.* This yet further dilates the duty, makes it universally mutual; *one subject to another.* This directly turns bout the vain contest of men, that arises from the natural mischief of self-love. Every one would carry it, and be best and highest. The very company of Christ, and his exemplary lowliness, and the meanness of himself and those his followers, all these did not bar out this frothy foolish question, *Who shall be greatest?* And so far it was disputed, that it occasioned heat about it, *a strife among them.* Luke xxii. 24. Now, this rule is just opposite: each is to strive to be lowest, *subject one to another.*

This doth not annul either civil or church government, nor those differences that are grounded upon the law of nature, or of civil society; for we see immediately before, that such differences are allowed, and the particular duties of them recommended: but it only requires that all due respect, according to their station, be given by each Christian to another. And though there can not be such a subjection to masters or parents to their servants and children, as is due to them from these, yet, a lowly, meek carrying of their authority, a tender respect of their youth, the receiving of an admonition from them duly qualified, is that which suits with the rule; and, in general, not delighting in the trampling on, or abusing of any, but rather seeking the credit and good esteem of all as our own; taking notice of that good in them, wherein they are beyond us (for all have some advantage, and none hath all); and, in a word (and it is the precept of St. Paul, like this of our apostle here), *In honor preferring one another*, Rom. xii. 10, *q. d.*: Let this be all the strife, who shall put most respect each on another, according to the capacity and station of every one: *in giving honor, go each one before another.*

Now, that such carriage may be sincere, no empty compliment, or court holy water (as they speak), but a part of the solid holiness of a Christian, the apostle requires the true principle of such deportment, the grace of *humility*, that a Christian *put on that;* not the appearance of it, to act in as a stage-garment, but the truth of it, as their constant habit. *Be ye clothed with humility.* It must appear in your outward carriage; so the resemblance of clothing imports. But let it appear as really it is; so the very name of it imports. It is not ταπεινοφανία, but ταπεινοφροσύνη; not *a show of humility*, but heart-lowliness, *humility of mind.*

As it is the bent of humility to hide other graces, so far as piety to God and our brethren will permit, so, it would willingly hide itself; it loves not to appear but as necessity urges. Appear it must, and it doth somewhat more appear than many other graces do, though it seeks not to appear. It is seen as a modest man or woman's apparel, which they wear not for the end that it may be seen; they do not gaudily flaunt and delight in dressing: though there is a decency as well as necessity, which they do and may have respect to, yet it is in so neat and unaffected a way, that they are a good example even in that point. Thus, humility in carriage and words, is as the decorum of this clothing, but the main is the real usefulness of it.

And therefore, a truly humble man desires not much to appear humble. Yea, were it not for disedifying his brethren, he would rather disguise and hide, not only other things by humility, but even humility itself, and would be content, upon the mistake of some words or gestures, to pass for proud and vain, being humbled within, rather than to be big in his own eyes, under a semblance of outward lowliness. Yea, were it not that charity and piety do both forbid it, he would not care to do some things on purpose that might seem arrogant, to carry humility unseen, that doth so naturally delight in covering all graces, and is sorry that it can not do so without being seen itself, as that garment that covers the rest, must of necessity be seen itself. But seeing it must be so, it is with the least show that may be, as a dark veil cast about rich attire, hides their show, and makes very little itself.

This, therefore, is mainly to be studied, that the seat of humility be *the heart.* Although it will be seen in the carriage, yet as little as it can; as few words as may be concerning itself; and those it doth speak, must be the real thoughts of the mind, and not an affected voice of it differing from the inward

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sense: otherwise, humble speech and carriage only put on without, and not fastened in the inside, is the most refined and subtle, and indeed the most dangerous kind of pride. And this I would recommend as a safe way: Ever let thy thoughts concerning thyself be below what thou utterest; and what thou seest needful or fitting to say to thine own abasement, be not only content (which most are not) to be taken at thy word, and believed to be such by them that hear thee, but be desirous of it, and let that be the end of thy speech, to persuade them, and gain it of them, that they really take thee for as worthless and mean as thou dost express thyself.

*Infer.* But how little are we acquainted with the real frame of Christianity, the most living without a rule, not laying it to their words and ways at all, nor yielding so much as seeming obedience to the gospel; while others take up a kind of profession, and think all consists in some religious performances, and do not study the inward reserve of their heart-evils, nor labor to have that temple purged: for the heart should be a temple, and it stands in much need of a sweeping out of the filthiness, and putting out of idols. Some there be, who are much busied about the matter of their assurance, still upon that point, which it is lawful indeed, and laudable to inquire after, yet not so as to neglect other things more needful. It were certainly better for many, when they find no issue that way, to turn somewhat of their diligence to the study of Christian graces and duties in their station, and to task themselves for a time, were it to the more special seeking, first, of some one grace, and then, of another, as meekness, and patience, and this particularly of humility. To be truly heart-humble—many men despise it in others: but some that will commend it in the general, or in some of those in whom they behold it, yet seek not to *put it on* themselves. They love to be more gay, and to seem to be somebody, and not to abase themselves. It is the way, say they, to be undone. This clothing is too poor a stuff, and too sad a color for them. Oh, my brethren, you know not the excellency of it. Ye look out at a distance and judge according to your light vain minds. But will you see it by the light of the word, and then you shall perceive much hidden richness and comeliness in it. And do not only approve it, and call it comely on others, but put it on, and so, it is most comely. And as it is with respect to all graces, so, particularly, as to this clothing of humility, though it make least show, yet, come near, and you will see it both rich and comely; and though it hides other graces, yet, when they do appear under it, as sometimes they will, a little glance of them so, makes them much more esteemed. Rebecca's beauty and her jewels were covered with a veil, but when they did appear, the veil set them off, and commended them, though at a distance it hid them.

Again: As in all graces, so, particularly in this grace, take heed of a disguise or counterfeit of it. Oh, for sincerity in all things, and particularly in this! To be low in thine own eyes, and willing to be so in the eyes of others, this is the very upright nature of heart-humility. 1st. Not to be deluded with a false conceit of advantages thou hast not. 2dly. Not to be swelled with a vain conceit of those thou really hast. 3dly. Not affecting to be esteemed by others, either upon their imagining thee to have some good that is not in thee, or discerning that which is. Is not the day at hand, when men will be taken off the false heights they stand on, and set on their own feet; when all the esteem of others shall vanish and pass away like smoke, and thou shalt be just what God finds and accounts thee, and neither more nor less? Oh! the remembrance of that day when a true estimate will be made of all, this would make men hang less upon the unstable conceits and opinions of one another, knowing our judgment and day shall shortly end. Be it little or much that thou hast, the lower and closer thou carriest it under this cloak, the safer shall it and thou be, the more shall it increase, and thou shalt be the liker him in whom *all fulness dwells*. In this he hath most expressly set himself before us as our pattern; and one says well, "Surely, man might now be constrained to be proud, for whom God himself became humble."

Now, to work the heart to an humble posture, 1. Look *into thyself* in earnest: and truly, whosoever thou be that hast the highest conceit of thyself, and the highest causes for it, a real sight of thyself will lay thy crest. Men look on any good, or any fancy of it, in themselves, with both eyes, and skip over as unpleasant their real defects and deformities. Every man is naturally his own flatterer; otherwise, flatteries, and false cryings up from others, would make little impression; but hence their success, they meet with the same conceit within. But let any man see his ignorance, and lay what he knows not over against what he knows; the disorders in his heart and affections, over against any right motion in them; his secret follies and sins, against his outwardly blameless carriage—this man shall not readily love and embrace himself; yea, it shall be impossible for him not to abase and abhor himself.

2. Look on the good in others, and the evil in thyself; make that the parallel, and then thou wilt walk humbly. Most men do just the contrary, and that foolish and unjust comparison puffs them up.

3. Thou art not required to be ignorant of that good which really is so indeed; but beware of imagining *that* to be good which is not; yea, rather let something that is truly good pass thy view, and see it within, rather than beyond its true size. And then, whatsoever it be, see it not as thine own, but as God's, his free gift; and so, the more thou

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hast, looking on it in that view, thou wilt certainly be the more humble, as having the more obligations: the weight of them will press thee down, and lay thee still lower, as you see it in Abraham—the clear visions and promises he had made him fall down flat to the ground. Gen. xv. 12.

4. Pray much for the spirit of humility, the Spirit of Christ, for that is it; otherwise, all thy vileness will not humble thee. When men hear of this or of other graces, and how reasonable they are, they think presently to have them, and do not consider the natural enmity and rebellion of their own hearts, and the necessity of receiving them from heaven. And therefore, in the use of all other means, be most dependant on that influence, and most in the use of that means which opens the heart most to that influence, and draws it down upon the heart, and that is prayer.

Of all the evils of our corrupt nature, there is none more connatural and universal than pride, the grand wickedness, self-exalting in our own and others' opinion. Though I will not contest what was the first step in that complicated first sin, yet certainly this of pride was one, and a main ingredient in it—that which the unbelief conceived going before, and the disobedience following after, were both servants to; and ever since, it sticks still deep in our nature. St. Augustine says truly, "That which first overcame man, is the last thing he overcomes." Some sins, comparatively, may die before us, but this hath life in it, sensibly as long as we. It is as the heart of all, the first living, and the last dying; and it hath this advantage, that, whereas other sins are fomented by one another, this feeds even on virtues and graces as a moth that breeds in them, and consumes them, even in the finest of them, if it be not carefully looked to. This hydra, as one head of it is cut off, another rises up. It will secretly cleave to the best actions, and prey upon them. And therefore is there so much need that we continually watch, and fight, and pray against it, and be restless in the pursuit of real and deep humiliation, daily seeking to advance further in it; to be nothing, and desire to be nothing; not only to bear, but to love our own abasement, and the things that procure and help it, to take pleasure in them, so far as may be without sin: yea, even in respect of our sinful failings, when they are discovered, to love the bringing low of ourselves by them, while we hate, and grieve for the sin of them.

And, above all, it is requisite to watch ourselves in our best things, that self get not in, or, if it break in, or steal in at any time, that it be presently found out and cast out again; to have that established within us, to do all for God, to intend him and his glory in all, and to be willing to advance his glory, were it by our own disgrace: not to make raising or pleasing thyself the rule of exercising thy parts and graces, when thou art called to use and bring them forth, but the good of thy brethren, and in that, the glory of thy Lord. Now, this is indeed to be severed from self and united to him, to have self-love turned into the love of God. And this is his own work: it is above all other hands: therefore the main combat against pride, and the conquest of it, and the gaining of humility, is certainly by prayer. God bestows himself upon them who are most abundant in prayer; and they to whom he shows himself most are certainly the most humble.

Now, to stir us up to diligence in the exercise of this grace, take briefly a consideration or two.

1. Look on that above pointed at, the high example of lowliness set before us: Jesus Christ requiring our particular care to take this lesson from him. And is it not most reasonable? He the most fair, the most excellent and complete of all men, and yet the most humble! He more than a man, who yet willingly became, in some sort, less than a man, as it is expressed, Psalm xxii. 6, *a worm and no man.* And when Majesty itself *emptied itself*, and descended so low, shall a worm swell and be high-conceited?

Then, consider, it was for *us* he humbled himself, to expiate our pride: and therefore it is evidently the more just that we follow a pattern which is both so great in itself, and doth so nearly concern us. O humility, the virtue of Christ (that which he so peculiarly espoused), how dost thou confound the vanity of our pride.

2. Consider the safety of grace under this clothing; it is that which keeps it unexposed to a thousand hazards. Humility doth grace no prejudice in covering it, but indeed shelters it from violence and wrong: therefore they do justly call it *conservatrix virtutum*, the preserver of graces; and one says well, that "he who carries other graces without humility, carries a precious powder in the wind without a cover."

3. Consider the increase of grace by it, as here expressed; the perfect enmity of God against pride, and his bounty toward humility. *He resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

*God resisteth the proud* [ἀντιτάσσεται], singles it out for his grand enemy, and sets himself in battle array against it: so the word is. It breaks the ranks of men in which he hath set them, when they are not subject, ὑποτασσόμενοι, as the word is before; yea, pride not only breaks rank, but rises up in rebellion against God, and doth what it can to dethrone him and usurp his place: therefore he orders his forces against it. And to be sure, if God be able to make his party good, pride shall not escape ruin. He will break it, and bring it low: for he is set upon that purpose, and will not be diverted.

*But he giveth grace*—pours it out plentifully upon humble hearts. His sweet dews and showers of grace slide off the mountains of



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pride, and fall on the low valleys of humble hearts, and make them pleasant and fertile. The swelling heart, puffed up with a fancy of fullness, hath no room for grace. It is lifted up is not hallowed and fitted to receive and contain the graces that descend from above. And again, as the humble heart is most capacious, and, as being emptied and hollowed, can hold most, so it is the most thankful, acknowledges all as received, while the proud cries out that all is his own. The return of glory that is due from grace, comes most freely and plentifully from an humble heart: God delights to enrich it with grace, and it delights to return him glory. The more he bestows on it, the more it desires to honor him with all: and the more it doth so, the more readily he bestows still more upon it; and this is the sweet intercourse between God and the humble soul. This is the noble ambition of humility, in respect whereof all the aspirings of pride are low and base. When all is reckoned, the lowliest mind is truly the highest; and these two agree so well, that the more lowly it is, it is thus the higher; and the higher thus, it is still the more lowly.

Oh, my brethren, want of this is a great cause of all our wants. Why should our God bestow on us what we would bestow on our idol, self? Or, if not to idolize thyself, yet to idolize the thing, the gift that grace bestowed, to fetch thy believing and comforts from that, which is to put it in his place who gave, and *to make Baal of it*, as some would render Hosea ii. 8.* Now he will not furnish thee thus to his own prejudice therein. Seek, therefore, to have thy heart on a high design, seeking grace still, not to rest in any gift, nor to grow vain and regardless of him upon it. If we had but this fixed with us—"What gift or grace I seek, what comfort I seek, it shall be no sooner mine, but it shall be all thine again, and myself with it; I desire nothing from thee, but that it may come back to thee, and draw me with it unto thee; this is all my end, and all my desire"—the request thus presented would not come back so often unanswered.

This is the only way to grow quickly rich: come still poor to him who hath enough ever to enrich thee, and desire of his riches, not for thyself, but for him. Mind entirely his glory in all thou hast and seekest to have. What thou hast, use so, and what thou wantest, vow that thou wilt use it so: let it be his in thy purpose, even before it be thine in possession, as Hannah did in her suit for a son, 1 Sam. i. 11; and thou shalt obtain it as she did. And then, as she was, be thou faithful in the performance: *Him whom I received* (says she) *by petition, I have returned to the Lord.*

It is undoubtedly the secret pride and selfishness of our hearts, that obstruct much of the bounty of God's hand in the measure of our graces, and the sweet embraces of his love, which we should otherwise find. The more that we let go of ourselves, still the more should we receive of himself. Oh, foolish we, who refuse so blessed an exchange!

To this humility, as in these words it is taken in the notion of our inward thoughts touching ourselves, and our carriage in relation to others, the apostle joins the other humility, in relation to God; being indeed the different actings of one and the same grace, and inseparably connected each with the other.

VER. 6. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.

THIS is pressed by a reason both of equity and necessity, in that word. *The mighty hand of God.* He is sovereign Lord of all, and all things do obeisance to him; therefore it is *just*, that you his people, professing loyalty and obedience to him, be most submissive and humble in your subjection to him in all things. Again, mark *the necessity, his mighty hand:* there is no striving, it is a vain thing to flinch and struggle, for he doth what he will. And his hand is so mighty, that the greatest power of the creature is nothing to it. Yea, it is all indeed derived from him, and therefore can not do any whit against him. If thou wilt not yield, thou must yield: if thou wilt not be led, thou shalt be pulled and drawn. Therefore, submission is your only course.

A third reason by which this duty is pressed, is that of utility, or the certain advantage of it. As there is nothing to be gained, yea, rather, as you are certainly ruined by reluctance, so this humble submission is the only way to gain your point. What would you have under any affliction, but be delivered and raised up? Thus alone can you attain that: *Humble yourselves, and he shall raise you up in due time.*

This is the end why he humbles you: he lays weights upon you, that you may be depressed. Now, when this end is gained, that you are willingly so, then the weights are taken off, and you are lifted up by his gracious hand. Otherwise, it is not enough that he hath humbled you by his hand, unless you *humble yourselves* under his hand. Many have had great and many pressures, one affliction after another, and been humbled, and yet not made humble, as they commonly express the difference: humbled by force in regard of their outward condition, but not humbled in their inward temper; and therefore, as soon as the weight is off, like heaps of wool, they rise up again, and grow as big as they were.

If we would consider this in our particular trials, and aim at this deportment, it were our wisdom. Are they not mad, who, under any stroke, quarrel or struggle against God?

* The words *Gnasu Lebagnol*, which we render *which they prepared for* Baal, may, as the margin notes, be translated *wherewith they made* Baal.—DR. DODDRIDGE.

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what gain your children thus at your hands, but more blows? Nor is this only an unseemly and unhappy way, openly to resist and strive, but even secretly to fret and grumble; for he hears the least whispering of the heart, and looks most how that behaves itself under his hand. Oh, humble acceptance of his chastisement, is our duty and our peace; that which gains most on the heart of our Father, and makes the rod fall soonest out of his hand.

And not only should we learn this in our outward things, but in our spiritual condition, as the thing the Lord is much pleased with in his children. There is a stubbornness and fretting of heart concerning our souls, that arises from pride and the untamedness of our nature; and yet some take a pleasure in it, touching the matter of comfort and assurance, if it be withheld. Or (which they take more liberty in), if it be sanctification and victory over sin they seek, and yet find little or no success, but the Lord holding them under in these, they then vex themselves, and wax more discontented, and nothing pleases them: as pevish children, upon the refusal of somewhat they would have, take displeasure, and make no account of the daily provision made for them, and all the other benefits they have by the care and love of their parents. This is a folly very unbeseeming the children that are the *children of wisdom*, and should walk as such; and till they learn more humble respect for their Father's will, they are still the farther off from their purpose. Were they once brought to submit the matter, and give him heartily his will, he would readily give them theirs, as far as it were for their good: as you say to your children, of anything they are too stiff and earnest in, and make a noise for, "Cry not for it, and you shall have it."

And this is the thing we observe not, that the Lord often by his delays, is aiming at this; and were this done, we can not think how graciously he would deal with us. His gracious design is, to make much room for grace, by much humbling; especially in some spirits which need much trying, or when he means much to enable for some singular service. And thus, the time is not lost, as we are apt to imagine, but it furthers our end, while we think the contrary. It is necessary time and pains that are given to the unballasting of a ship, the casting out of the earth and sand, when it is to be laden with spices. We must be emptied more, if we would have more of that fulness and riches which we are longing for.

So long as we fume and chafe against his way, though it be in our best supplications, we are not in a posture for a favorable answer. Would we wring things out of his hand by fretfulness? That is not the way: no; but present humble submissive suits: "Lord, this is my desire, but thou art wise and gracious; I refer the matter to thy will for the thing, and for the measure, and for the time, and all." Were we moulded to this composure, then were mercy near. When he hath gained this, broken our will and tamed our stoutness, then he relents and pities. See Jer. xxx. 17, 18. *Because they called thee an outcast, &c., thus saith the Lord, behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, &c.*

This I would recommend in any estate, the humble folding under the Lord's hand, kissing the rod, and falling low before him; and this is the way to be raised. But there may be some one who thinks he hath tried this awhile, and is still at the same point, hath gained nothing, and he may therefore be ready to fall back to his old repinings; let such a one know that his humbling and compliance were not upright; it was a fit of false, constrained submission, and therefore lasts not: it was but a tempting of God, instead of submitting to him. "Oh, will he have a submission? I will try it, but with this reserve, that if after such a time I gain not what I seek, I shall think it is lost, and that I have reason to return to my discontent." Though the man says not thus, yet this meaning is secretly under it. But wouldst thou have it right, it must be without condition, without reserve; no time, nor anything, prescribed: and then he will make his word good, *he will raise thee up*, and that

*In due time.* Not thy fancied time, but his own wisely appointed time. Thou thinkest, now I am sinking; if he help not now, it will be too late. Yet he sees it otherwise: he can let thee sink still lower, and yet bring thee up again. He doth but stay till the most fit time. Thou canst not see it now, but thou shalt see it, that his chosen time is absolutely best. *God waiteth to be gracious.* Isa. xxx. 18. Doth he wait, and wilt not thou? Oh, the firm belief of his wisdom, power, and goodness, what difficulty will it not surmount? So then, be humble under his hand. Submit not only thy goods, thy health, thy life, but thy soul. Seek and wait for thy pardon as a condemned rebel, with thy rope about thy neck. Lay thyself low before him, stoop at his feet, and crave leave to look up, and speak, and say: "Lord, I am justly under the sentence of death: if I fall under it, thou art righteous, and I do here acknowledge it; but there is deliverance in Christ, thither I would have recourse: yet, if I be beaten back, and kept out, and faith withheld from me, and I perish, as it were, in view of salvation; if I see the rock, and yet can not come at it, but drown; what have I to say? In this, likewise, thou art righteous. Only, if it seem good unto thee to save the vilest, most wretched of sinners, and to show great mercy in pardoning so great debts, the higher will be the glory of that mercy. However, here I am resolved to wait, till either thou graciously receive me, or absolutely reject me. If thou do this, I have not a word to

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say against it; but because thou art gracious, I hope thou wilt yet have mercy on me,—I dare say that the promise in the text belongs to such a soul, and *it shall be raised up in due time.*

And what though most, or all of our life, should pass without much sensible taste even of spiritual comforts, a poor all it is! Let us not over-esteem this *moment*, and so think too much of our better or worse condition in it, either in temporals, or even in spirituals, so far as regards such things as are more arbitrary and accessory to the name of our spiritual life. Provided we can humbly wait for free grace and depend on the word of promise, we are safe. If the Lord will clearly shine on us, and refresh us, this is much to be desired and prized; but if he so think fit, what if we should be all our days held at a distance, and under a cloud of wrath? It is but *a moment in his anger.* Psalm xxx. 5. Then follows a life-time in his favor, an endless life-time. It is *but weeping* (as it there follows) *for a night, and joy comes in the morning*, that clearer morning of Eternity, to which no evening succeeds.

VER. 7. Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.

AMONG other spiritual secrets, this is one, and a prime one, the combination of lowliness and boldness, *humble confidence:* this is the true temper of a child of God toward his great and good Father; nor can any have it, but they who are indeed his children, and have within them that *spirit of adoption* which he *sends into their hearts.* Galatians iv. 6.

And these two the apostle here joins together; *Humble yourselves under the hand of God*, and yet *cast your care on him:* upon that same hand under which you ought to humble yourselves, must you withal cast over your care, all your care; *for he careth for you.*

Consider, I. The nature of this confidence, *casting all your care on him.* II. The ground or warrant of it, *For he careth for you.*

I. For the nature of it. Every man hath some desires and purposes that are predominant with him, besides those that relate to the daily exigencies of life with which he is compassed; and in both, according to their importance or his estimate of them, and the difficulties occurring in them, he is naturally carried to be proportionally thoughtful and careful in them. Now, the excess and distemper of this care, is one of the great diseases and miseries of man's life. Moral men, perceiving and feeling it, have been tampering at the cure, and prescribing after their fashion, but with little success. Some present abatement and allay of the paroxysm or extremity, their rules may reach; but they never go near the bottom, the cause of the evil, and therefore can not work a thorough sound cure of it. Something they have spoken, somewhat fitly, of the surpassing of nature's rule and size in the pursuit of superfluous, needless things; but, for the unavoidable care of things needful, they know no redress, but refer men entirely to their own industry and diligence. They can tell how little will serve him who seeks no more than what will serve, but how to be provided with that little, or to be assured of it, and freed from troubling care, they can not tell.

Now, truly it were a great point, to be well instructed in the former; and it is necessary for the due practice of the rule here given, touching necessary cares, first, to cut off cares unnecessary, to retrench all extravagant, superfluous desires. For, certainly, a great part of the troublous cares of men, relate merely to such things as have no other necessity in them, than what our disordered desires create, nor truly any real good in them, but what our fancy puts upon them. Some are indeed forced to labor hard for their daily bread; but, undoubtedly, a great deal of the sweat and toil of the greatest part of men is about unnecessaries: *ad supervacua sudatur.* Such an estate, so much by the year, such a place, so much honor, and esteem, and rank in the world,—these are the things that make some slaves to the humors of others, whom they court, and place their dependance on, for these ends; and those, possibly, to whom they are so enthralled, are themselves at as little liberty, but captivated to the humors of some others, either above them, or who being below them, may give accession and furtherance to their ends of enrichment, advancement, or popularity. Men who are set on these things, forge necessities to themselves, and make vain things as necessary as food and raiment, resolving that they will have them, or fall in the chase, being wilfully and unavoidably bent on them. *They that will be rich*, says the apostle (1 Tim. vi. 9), who are resolved on it upon any terms, meet with terms hard enough,—*they fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. Drown* them: there is no recovering, but still they are plunged deeper and deeper. *Foolish lusts*; unreasonable, childish desires; after one bargain, such another, and after one sin, another to make even, and somewhat then to keep that whole, and so on without end. If their hearts are set upon purchase and land, still some house and neighbor-field, some *Naboth's vineyard* is in their eyes, and all the rest is nothing without that, which discovers the madness of this humor, this dropsy-thirst.

And this is the first thing, indeed, to be looked to, that our desires and cares be brought to a due compass. And what would we have? Think we that contentment lies in so much, and no less? When that is attained, it shall appear as far off as before. When children are at the foot of a high hil.

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they think it reaches the heavens, and yet, if they were there, they would find themselves as far off as before, or at least not sensibly nearer. Men think, Oh, had I this, I were well; and when it is reached, it is but an advanced standing from which to look higher, and spy out for some other thing.

We are indeed children in this, to think the good of our estate lies in the greatness, and not in the fitness of it for us. He were a fool that would have his clothes so, and think the bigger and longer they were, they would please him the better. And certainly, as in apparel, so in place and estate, and all outward things, their good lies not in their greatness, but in their fitness for us. Our Savior tells us expressly, that *man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth*, Luke xii. 13. Think you that great and rich persons live more content? Believe it not. If they will deal freely, they can tell you the contrary; that there is nothing but a show in them, and that great estates and places have great grief and cares attending them, as shadows are proportioned to their bodies. And if they have no real crosses, luxury frames troubles to itself; like a variety of dishes corrupting the stomach and causing variety of diseases. And instead of need, they have fantastic vain discontents that will trouble men as much as greater, be it but this hawk flies not well, or that dog runs not well, to men whose hearts are in those games.

So then, I say, this is first to be regulated: all childish, vain, needless cares are to be discharged, and, as being unfit to cast on thy God, are to be quite cast out of thy heart. Entertain no care at all but such as thou mayest put into God's hands, and make his on thy behalf; such as he will take off thy hand, and undertake for thee.

All needful lawful care, and that only, will he receive. So then, rid thyself quite of all that thou canst not take this course with, and then, without scruple, take confidently this course with all the rest. Seek a well-regulated, sober spirit. In the things of this life, *be content with food and raiment*; not delicates, but *food*; not ornament, but *raiment*, τροφὴν οὐ τρυφήν, σκεπάσματα οὐ κοσμήματα; and conclude, that what thy father carves to thee is best for thee, the fittest measure, for he knows it, and loves thee wisely. This course our Savior would have thee take, Matt. vi. 31; first, to cut off superfluous care, then, to turn over on thy God the care of what is necessary. He will look to that, thou hast him engaged; and he can and will give thee beyond that, if he sees it fit.

Only, this is required of thee, to refer the matter to his discretion entirely. Now, in thy thus well-regulated affairs and desires, there is a diligent care and study of thy duty; this he lays on thee. There is a care of support in the work, and of the success of it; this thou oughtest to lay on him. And so indeed, all the care is turned off from thee upon him, even that of duty, which from him lies on us. We offer our service, but for skill and strength to discharge it, that care we lay on him, and he allows us to do so; and then, for the event and success, with that we trust him entirely. And this is the way to walk contentedly and cheerfully homeward, leaning and resting all the way on him, who is both our *guide* and our *strength*, who hath us and all our good in his gracious hand. Much zeal for him, and desire of his glory, minding our duty in relation to that, is the thing he requires, and while we are bending our whole care to that, he undertakes the care of us and our condition: as that king said to his favorite, when persuading him to fidelity and diligence in his state-trust, "Do my affairs, and I will do yours." Such a word directly hath St. Chrysostom: Σὺ μεριμνησον τὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ αὐτὸς μεριμνήσει τὰ σὰ: If thou have a concern for the things that are God's, he will also be careful with thee and thine.

The care of duty thus carried, is sweet and light, doth not cut and divide the mind; it is united and gathered in God, and rests there, and walks in his hand all the way. He bears the weight of all our works, and *works them in us*, and for us; and therein lies our peace, that he *ordains for us*. Isa. xxvi. 12. If thou wouldst shake off the yoke of obedience, thou art likewise to be shaken off thyself; but if, in humble diligence in the ways of God, thou walk on in his strength, there is nothing that concerns thee and thy work, but he will take the charge and care of thyself, and all thine interests. Art thou troubled with fears, enemies, and snares? Untrouble thyself of that, for he is with thee. He hath promised to *lead thee in a straight and safe path*, Psalm xxvii. 11; and to rebuke all thine enemies, to *subdue thine iniquities for thee*, Micah vii. 19; and to *fight against those that fight against thee*, Psalm xxxv. 1. *No weapon formed against thee shall prosper*, Isa. liv. 17; *yea, when thou passest through the water, and through the fire*, he *will be with thee*, Isa. xliii. 2. Doth thine own weakness discourage thee? Hath he not engaged for that too? So lay over that care upon him. Hath he not spoken of *strengthening the weak hands and feeble knees*, and said, *that the lame shall leap as an hart?* Isa. xxxv. 3, 6. And though there is nothing in thyself but unrighteousness and weakness, yet there is in him for thee, *righteousness and strength*, Isa. xlv. 24—*righteousness*, to express the abundance of righteousness. When thou art ready to faint, a look to him will revive thee; a believing look draws in of his strength to thy soul, and renews it. Isa. xl. 29. And know, the more tender and weak thou art, the more tender he is over thee, and the more strong will he be in thee. *He feeds his flock like a shepherd*, and the weakest he is the most careful of: *they are carried in his arms*

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*and his bosom*, Isa. xl. 11, and it is easy for the feeblest to go so.

And as for the issue and success of thy way, let not that trouble thee at all: that is the care he would have thee wholly disburden thyself of, and lay entirely upon him. Do not vex thyself with thinking, how will this and that be, what if this and the other fall ou. That is his part wholly, and if thou meddle with it, thou at once displeasest him, and disquietest thyself. This sin carries the punishment of it close tied to it. If thou wilt be struggling with that which belongs not to thee, and poising at that burden that is not thine, what wonder, yea, I may say, what pity if thou fall under it? Art thou not well served? Is it not just, that if thou wilt do for thyself, and bear for thyself, what thy Lord calls for to bear for thee, thou shouldst feel the weight of it to thy cost?

But what is the way of this devolving of my burden? There is a faculty in it that all persons have not: though they would do thus with it, they can not; it lies on them, and they are not able to cast it on God. The way is, doubtless, by praying and believing: these are the hands by which the soul can turn over to God what itself can not bear: all cares, the whole bundle, is most dexterously transferred thus. *Be careful in nothing.* Phil. iv. 6. A great word! Oh, but how shall it be? Why thus, says he, *In all things make your requests known unto God*, and in a confident cheerful way, *supplication* mixed with *thanksgiving;* so shall it be the more lively and active to carry forth, and carry up thy cares, and discharge thee of them, and lay them on God. Whatsoever it is that presses thee, go tell thy Father; put over the matter into his hand, and so thou shalt be freed from μερίμνα, that dividing, perplexing care, that the world is full of.

No more, but when thou art either to do or suffer anything, when thou art about any purpose or business, go tell God of it, and acquaint him with it; yea, burden him with it, and thou hast done for matter of caring: no more care, but quiet, sweet diligence in thy duty, and dependance on him for the carriage of thy matters. And in this prayer, faith acts: it is a believing requesting. *Ask in faith, not doubting.* Jam. i. 6. So thou rollest over all on him; that is the very proper working of faith, the carrying the soul, and all its desires, out of itself unto God, as expressed Psalm xxxvi. 5: *roll over on God*—make one bundle of all; roll thy cares, and thyself with them, as one burden all on thy God.

Now faith, to do this, stays itself on the promise. It can not move but on firm ground, and the promises are its ground; and for this end is this added, *he careth for thee.*

This must be established in the heart. 1. The firm belief of the divine providence, that all things are managed and ruled by it, and that in the highest power and wisdom; that there is no breaking of his purposes, nor resisting of his power. *The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations.* Psalm. xxxiii. 11. 2. The belief of his gracious providence to his own people, that he orders all for their true advantage, and makes all different lines and ways concentre in their highest good; all to meet in that, how opposite soever in appearance. See Rom. viii. 28. 3. A particular confidence of his good-will toward thee, and undertaking for thee. Now, if this be the question, the promise resolves thee: trust him, and he takes on the trust, and there is no other condition; cast on him thy care, and he takes it on, he cares for thee. His royal word is engaged not to give thee the slip, if thou do really lay it upon him. *Cast thy burden upon the Lord*, Psalm lv. 22;—hand it over, heave it upon him—*and he shall sustain thee;* shall bear both, if thou trust him with both, both thee and thy burden: *He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.*

*Inf.* 1. The children of God have the only sweet life. The world thinks not so, rather looks on them as poor, discontented, lowering creatures; but it sees not what an uncaring, truly secure life they are called to. While others are turmoiling and wrestling, each with his projects and burdens for himself, and are at length crushed and sinking under them (for that is the end of all that do for themselves), the child of God goes free from the pressure of all that concerns him, it being laid over on his God. If he use his advantage, he is not racked with musings, Oh! what will become of this and that; but goes on in the strength of his God as he may, offers up poor, but sincere endeavors to God, and is sure of one thing, that all shall be well. He lays his affairs and himself on God, and so hath no pressing care; no care but the care of love, how to please, how to honor his Lord. And in this, too, he depends on him, both for skill and strength; and touching the success of things, he leaves that as none of his to be burdened with, casts it on God, and since he careth for it, they need not both care, his care alone is sufficient. Hence springs peace, inconceivable peace. *Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Jesus Christ.* Phil. iv. 6, 7.

*Inf.* 2. But truly, the godly are much wanting to themselves, by not improving this their privilege. They too often forget this their sweet way, and fret themselves to no purpose; they wrestle with their burdens themselves, and do not entirely and freely *roll them over on God.* They are surcharged with them, and he calls for them, and yet they will not give them him. They think to spare him, but indeed, in this, they disobey, and dishonor, and so grieve him; and they find the grief return on themselves, and yet can not learn to be wise.

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Why deal we thus with our God and with our souls, grieving both at once? Let it never be, that for any outward thing thou perplex thyself, and ravel thy thoughts, as in thickets, with the cares of this life. Oh, how unsuitable are these to a child of God, for whom a life so far more excellent is provided! Hath he prepared a kingdom for thee, and will he not bestow thy charges in the way to it? Think it not: *He knoweth you have need of these things.* Matt. vi. 32. Seek not vain things, nor great things: for these, it is likely, are not fit for thee; but seek what is needful and convenient in his judgment, and refer thyself to that.

Then, as for thy spiritual estate, lay over upon God the care of that too. Be not so much in thorny questionings, doubting and disputing at every step, Oh, is this accepted, and that accepted, and, so much deadness! &c.; but apply thyself more simply to thy duty. Lamely as it may be, halt on, and believe that he is gracious and pities thee, and lay the care of bringing thee through upon him. Lie not complaining and arguing, but *up and be doing, and the Lord shall be with thee.* 1 Chron. xxii. 16. I am persuaded that many a soul that hath some truth of grace, falls much behind in the progress, by this accustomed way of endless questionings. Men can scarcely be brought to examine and suspect their own condition, being carnally secure, and satisfied that all is well; but then, when once they awaken and set to this, they are ready to entangle themselves in it, and neglect their way, by poring on their condition. They will not set cheerfully to anything, because they want assurances and height of joy; and this course they take is the way to want it still. Walking humbly and sincerely, and offering at thy duty, and waiting on the Lord, is certainly the better way, and nearer that very purpose of thine; for *he meeteth him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember him in his ways.* Isa. lxiv. 5. One thing the Christian should endeavor to obtain, firm belief for the church: all the care of that must be cast on God, that he *will beautify Zion*, and perform all his word to her. And then think, do I trust him for the whole church, and the great affairs concerning it, and shall I doubt him for myself, or anything that concerns me? Do I confide in him for the steering and guidance of the whole ship, and shall I be peevishly doubting and distrusting about my pack in it?

Again, when in addition to the present and the past, thou callest in after evils by advance, and art still revolving the dangers before, and thy weakness. It is good, indeed, to entertain by these, holy fear and self-distrust; but by that, be driven in to trust on him who undertakes for thee, on him in whom thy strength lies, and be as sure and confident in him, as thou art, and justly art, distrustful of thyself.

Further, learn to proscribe nothing. Study entire resignation, for that is thy great duty and thy peace; that gives up all into the hand of thy Lord, and can it be in a better hand? First, refer the carving of outward things to him, heartily and fully. Then, stay not there, but go higher. If we have renounced the comforts of this world for God, let us add this, renounce even spiritual comforts for him too. Put all in his will: If I be in light, blessed be thou; and if in darkness, even then, blessed be thou too. As he saith of earthly treasures, *gold is mine, and silver is mine*—(and this may satisfy a Christian in those two, to desire no more of them than his Father sees fit to give, knowing that he, having all the mines and treasures of the world at his command, would not pinch and hold short his children, if it were good for them to have more); even thus it is in respect to the other, the true riches: Is not the Spirit mine, may God say, and all comforts mine? I have them to bestow, and enough of them. And ought not this to allay thy afflicting care, and to quiet thy repinings, and establish thy heart, in referring it to his disposal, as touching thy comfort and supplies? The whole golden mines of all spiritual comfort and good are his, and the Spirit itself. Then, will he not furnish what is fit for thee, if thou humbly attend on him, and lay the care of providing for thee upon his wisdom and love? This were the sure way to honor him with what we have, and to obtain much of what we have not; for certainly he deals best with those that do most absolutely refer all to him.

VER. 8. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.

VER. 9. Whom resist, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

THE children of God, if they rightly take their Father's mind, are always disburdened of perplexing carefulness, but never exempted from diligent watchfulness. Thus we find here, they are allowed, yea, enjoined, to cast all their care upon their wise and loving Father, and are secured by his care. He takes it well that they lay all over on him, yea, he takes it not well, when they forbear him, and burden themselves. He hath provided a sweet quiet life for them, could they improve and use it; a calm and firm condition in all the storms and troubles that are about them; however things go, to find content, and *be careful for nothing.*

Now, upon this, a carnal heart would imagine straight, according to its sense and inclination—as it desires to have it, so would it dream that it is—that then, a man devolving his care on God, may give up all watch and ward, and needs not apply himself to any kind of duty. But this is the ignorant and perverse mistake, the reasonless reasoning of the flesh. You see these are here joined, not only as agreeable, but indeed inseparable: *Cast*

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*all your care on him, for he careth for you*, and withal, *be sober, be vigilant.*

And this is the Scripture logic. *It is he that worketh in you to will and to do.* Phil. ii. 13. Then, would you possibly think, I need not work at all, or, if I do, it may be very easily and securely. No: *therefore*, says the apostle, because he worketh in you to will and to do, *work out your salvation*, yea, and do it *with fear and trembling*; work you in humble obedience to his command, and in dependance on him who *worketh all in you.*

Thus, here. *Cast your care on him*, not that you may be the more free to take your own pleasure and slothful ease, but, on the contrary, that you may be the more active and apt to watch: being freed from the burden of vexing carefulness, which would press and encumber you, you are the more nimble, as one eased of a load, to walk, and work, and watch as becomes a Christian. And for this very purpose is that burden taken off from you, that you may be more able and disposed for every duty that is laid upon you.

Observe these two as connected, and thence gather *first*, there is no right believing without diligence and watchfulness joined with it. That slothful reliance of most souls on blind thoughts of mercy will undo them: their faith is *a dead faith*, and a deadly faith; they are perishing and will not consider it. Such persons do not duly cast their care on God for their souls, for indeed they have no such care. *Secondly*, there is no right diligence without believing.

There is, as in other affairs, so, even in spiritual things, an anxious perplexing care, which is a distemper and disturbance to the soul: it seems to have a heat of zeal and affection in it, but is, indeed, not the natural right heat that is healthful, and enables for action, but a diseased, feverish heat, that puts all out of frame, and unfits for duty. It seems to stir and further, but indeed it hinders, and does not hasten us, but so as to make us stumble: as if there was one behind a man, driving and thrusting him forward, and not suffering him to set and order his steps in his course, this were the ready way, instead of advancing him, to weary him, and possibly give him a fall.

Such is the distrustful care that many have in their spiritual course: they raise a hundred questions about the way of their performances, and their acceptance, and their estate, and the issue of their endeavors. Indeed, we should endeavor to do all by our rule, and to walk exactly, and examine our ways; especially in holy things, to seek some insight and faculty in their performance, suiting their nature and end, and his greatness and purity whom we worship. This should be minded diligently, and yet calmly and composedly; for diffident doubtings do retard and disorder all. But quiet stayedness of heart on God, dependance on him, on his strength for performance, and his free love in Christ for acceptance, this makes the work go kindly and sweetly on, makes it pleasing to God, and refreshing to thy soul.

*Inf.* Certainly, thou art a vexation to thyself, and displeasest thy Lord, when thou an questioning whether thou shalt go on or not, from finding in thy service so much deadness and hardness; thinking, therefore, that it were as good to do nothing, that thou dost but dishonor him in all. Now, thou considerest not, that in these very thoughts thou dost more wrong and dishonor him than in thy worst services: for thou callest in question his lenity and goodness, takest him for a rigorous exacter, yea, representest him to thyself as a hard master, who is the most gentle and gracious of all masters. Do not use him so. Indeed, thou oughtest to *take heed to thy foot*, to see how thy heart is affected in his worship. Keep and watch it as thou canst, but in doing so, or in endeavoring to do, however thou find it, do not think he will use rigors with thee: but the more thou observest thine own miscarriages toward him, the less severely will he observe them. To think otherwise, to fret and repine that thy heart is not to his mind, nor indeed to thine own, to go on in a discontented impatience, this is certainly not the commanded watchfulness, but that forbidden carefulness.

*Be sober.*] This we have formerly spoken of, the apostle having formerly exhorted to it once and again in this epistle. It were easy to entertain men's minds with new discourse, if our task were rather to please than to profit; for there be many things which, with little labor, might be brought forth as new and strange to ordinary hearers. But there be a few things which chiefly concern us to know and practise, and these are to be more frequently represented and pressed. This apostle, and other inspired writers, drew from too full a spring to be ebb of matter; but they rather chose profitable iterations, than unprofitable variety; and so ought we.

This sobriety is not only temperance in meat and drink, but in all things that concern the flesh. Even that of diet is, though not all, yet a very considerable part of it; and this not only hath implied in it, that one exceed not in the quantity or quality, but even requires a regulating of ourselves in the manner of using our repast: that as we are not to make careful and studious provision, or to take up our thoughts how to please our palate, so, even in the use of sober, mean diet, we endeavor the mortifying of our flesh, not to eat and drink merely to please ourselves, or to satisfy our natural desire, but for God: even to propound this in our sitting down to it in obedience to him; to use these helps of life, and the life itself, to be spent in his obedience, and in endeavoring to advance his glory.

It is a most shameful idol, a dunghill-god indeed, to serve the belly, and to delight in feastings, or, in our ordinary repast, laying

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the reins loose on our appetite to take its own career. And yet, in this, men most commonly offend, even persons that are not notably intemperate, neither gluttonous nor drunken, and yet, I say, have not that holy, retained, bridled way of using their repast, with an eye upon a higher end.

But this sobriety, in its ample sense, binds not only that sense of lust, but all the rest in the use of their several delights, yea, and in the whole man, all the affections of the soul, in relation to this world, and the things of it: we are to be in it as weaned from it, and raised above it in the bent of our minds; *to use it as if we used it not.* 1 Cor. vii. 31.

This we speak and hear of, but do not apply ourselves really to this rule. Each hath some trifle or earthly vanity, one or more, but especially some choice one, that he can not be taken off from; as children readily have some toy that they set more by than the rest. We have childish hearts cleaving to vanity; one hankering after some preferment, another after some estate, lands, or houses, or money. And we are drunk in the pursuit of these, so that when our hearts should be fixed on Divine exercises, they can not stand, but reel to and fro, or stumble down and fall asleep, roving after those thoughts of that which we affect, staggering ever and anon, or else so plunged in them all the time, that we are as asleep in them.

Therefore, these two are here, and ordinarily, joined, *Be sober and watchful.* Glutting ourselves either with the delights, or with the desires and cares of earth, makes us sleepy: the fumes that arise from them surcharge us, and cast us into a deep sleep—a secure unminding of God and of ourselves, the interest of our immortal souls.

The pleasures of sense are too gross for the Divine soul. Divine, I call it, for so by original it is; but we abase it, and make it flesh by those gross earthly things, and make it unfit to rise heavenward. As insobriety, intemperance in diet, prejudices, the very natural spirits, making them dull, clogs their passage, and makes them move as a coach in a miry way, thus doth all inordinate use and love of inferior things: it makes the soul of a low, heavy constitution, so that it can not move freely in anything that is spiritual. Yea, where there is some truth of grace, yet it is obstructed and dulled by taking in too much of the world, and feeding on it; which is no more proper for the finest part of the man, for the soul, than the coarse ploughman's diet is for delicate, tender bodies of higher breeding; yea, the disproportion is far greater.

If, then, you would have free spirits for spiritual things, keep them at a spare diet in all things temporal. Let not out your hearts to anything here below. Learn to delight in God, and seek to taste of his transcendent sweetness: that will perfectly disrelish all lower delights. So your sobriety in abstaining from them shall be still further recompensed with more enjoyment of God, and you shall not lose pleasure by denying yourself the pleasures of earth, but shall change them for those that are unspeakably better and purer in their stead. He shall communicate himself unto you, the *light of whose countenance* feeds and satisfies the glorified spirits that are about his throne.

*Be vigilant.*] This watchfulness, joined with sobriety, extends to all the estates and ways of a Christian, being surrounded with hazards and snares. *He that despiseth his way shall die,* says Solomon, Proverbs xix. 16. The most do thus walk at random: they give attendance on public worship, and have some customary way of private prayer, but do not further regard how they walk, what is their carriage all the day long, what they speak, how they are in company, and how alone, which way their hearts go early and late, what it is that steals away most of their affection from God.

Oh, my beloved, did we know our continual danger, it would shake us out of this miserable dead security that possesses us. We think not on it, but there are snares laid for us all the way, in every path we walk in, and every step of it; in our meat and drink; in our calling and labor; in our house at home; in our journeying abroad; yea, even in God's house, and in our spiritual exercises, both there and in private. Knew we, or at least considered we this, we should choose our steps more exactly, and look to our ways, to our words, to our thoughts, which truly, whatsoever noise we make, we really do not. *Ponder the path of thy feet,* says Solomon; and before that, *Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.* And further, *Put away a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.* But, first of all, as the main reason and spring of all, *Keep thy heart with all diligence,* or *above all keeping, for out of it are the issues of life.* Proverbs iv. 23–26.

*Because your adversary the devil.*] An alarm to watchfulness is here given, from the watchfulness of our grand adversary. There be other two usually ranked with him, as the leading enemies of our souls, the world and our own flesh; but here he is expressly named who commands in chief, and orders and manages the war, using the service of the other two against us, as prime officers, under which most of the forces of particular temptations are ranked. Some others there be which he immediately commands and leads on himself, a regiment of his own, some spiritual temptations.

And we have need to be put in mind of the hostility and practices of Satan against us; for if the most were put to it, they would be forced to confess that they very seldom think on their spiritual danger from this hand. As we keep loose guard against the allurements of the world, and of our own corruption, so we watch not against the devices of Satan, but



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go on by guess, and suspect nothing, and so are easily a prey to all.

The least enemy being despised and neglected, as men observe, proves often too great. The smallest appearances of evil, the least things that may prejudice our spiritual good, while we make no reckoning of them, may do us great mischief. Our not considering them makes them become considerable, especially being under the command of a vigilant and skilful leader, who knows how to improve advantages. Therefore, in things which we many times account petty, and not worthy our notice, as having any evil in them, we should learn to suspect the address of this adversary, who usually hides himself, and couches under some covert, till he may appear irresistible, and seize on us; and then, indeed, he *roars*.

And this seeking the destruction of souls is, you see, marked as all his work. The prey he hunts is souls, that they may be as miserable as himself. Therefore he is justly called *our adversary*, the enemy of holiness and of our souls; first tempting to sin, and then accusing for sin, as his name here imports; appearing against us upon the advantages he hath gained. He studies our nature, and fits his temptation to it; knows the prevalency of lust, or earthliness, or that great and most general evil of pride, so like himself, and that is his throne in the heart. Sometimes *he boweth down*, as it is said of the lion, Psalm x. 9; he waits his opportunity craftily, and then assaults fiercely. And the children of God find sometimes so much violence in his temptations, that they surprise them; such horrid thoughts cast in as poisoned arrows, or *fiery darts*, as the apostle speaks, Eph. vi. 16. And this his enmity, though it is against man in general, yet is most enraged against the children of God. He goes about and spies where they are weakest, and among them, directs his attacks most against those who are most advanced in holiness, and nearest unto God. They were once under his power, and now being escaped from him, he pursues them, as Pharaoh did the Israelites, with all his forces, raging and roaring after them, as a prey that was once in his den, and under his paw, and now is rescued.

The resemblance hath in it, his strength, his diligence, and his cruelty. His strength, *a lion;* his diligence, *going about and seeking;* his cruelty, *roaring*, and *seeking to devour*.

*Inf.* Is it not most reasonable hence to press watchfulness; to keep continual watch, to see what comes in, and what goes out; to try what is under every offer of the world, every motion of our own natural hearts, whether there be not some treachery, some secret intelligence or not? Especially after a time of some special seasons of grace, and some special new supplies of grace, received in such seasons (as after the holy sacrament), then will he set on most eagerly, when he knows of the richest booty. The pirates oft let the ships pass as they go by empty, watch them well when they return richly laden. so doth this great pirate. Did he not assault our Savior straight after his baptism? ὁ περίεργος. Matt. iv. 3.

And, that we may *watch*, it concerns us *to be sober*. The instruction is military: a drunken soldier is not fit to be on the watch. This, most of us are, with our several fancies and vanities, and so exposed to this adversary. And when we have gained some advantage in a conflict, or when the enemy seems to retire and be gone, yet, even then, are we to be watchful, yea, then especially. How many, presuming on false safeties that way, and sitting down to carouse, or lying down to sleep, have been re-assaulted and cut off! *Invadunt urbem somno vinoque sepultam*. Oh, beware when you think yourselves most safe! That very thought makes you least safe. Keep always your spirits free from surcharges, and lavish profusion upon the world; keep from applying your hearts to anything in it, sitting down to it. Oh! no. Be like Gideon's army, fit to follow God, and to be victorious in him, not lying down to drink, but taking of it only as for necessity, in passing. Take our Savior's own word, *Take heed lest at any time your hearts be surcharged with surfeitings and drunkenness, and the cares of this life*. Luke xxi. 34. These will *overcharge* you and make you drunk, and cast you asleep.

Oh, mind your work, and your warfare always, more than your ease and pleasure! Seek it not here; your rest is not here. Oh, poor short rest, if it were! But follow the Lord Jesus through conflicts and sufferings. A little while, and you shall have certain victory, and after it everlasting triumph, rest, and pleasure, and a feast that shall not end, where there is no danger either of surfeiting or of wearying, but pure and perpetual delight. In this persuasion, you should be abstinent and watchful, and *endure hardship, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ*, as the apostle speaks, 2 Tim. xi. 4, *not entangling yourselves with the affairs of this life*, and thus be ready for encounters. Stand watching, and, if you be assaulted, *resist*.

*Whom resist, steadfast in the faith.*] To watchfulness, courage should be joined. He that watches and yields, seems rather to watch to receive, than to resist the enemy.

And this resistance should be continued even against multiplied assaults: for thou hast to deal with an enemy that will not easily give over, but will try several ways, and will redouble his onsets;* sometimes very thick, to weary thee out, sometimes after a little forbearance interposed, to catch thee unawares, when he is not expected. But in all, faint not, but be steadfast in thy resistance.

* Οὐ δίδωσιν ἀνάπαυσιν, οὐδὲ νικῶν, οὐδὲ νικώμενος.—PLUTARCH. in vita Marcel.

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"This is easily said," say you, "but how may it be? How shall I be able so to do?" Thus:—

*Steadfast in the faith.*] The most of men are under the power of one of these two evils, security or distrust; and out of the one, we readily fall into the other. Therefore the apostle frames his exhortations, and the arguments in support of it, in opposition to both these; first, against security in the former verse, *Be sober and watch*, and presses that by the proper argument of great and continuing danger; here against distrust, *Whom resist, steadfast in the faith*, and he adds an encouraging consideration of the common condition of the children of God in the world. *Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren.*

*Steadfast*, or solid, *by faith.*] This is absolutely necessary for resistance. A man can not fight upon a quagmire; there is no standing out without a standing, some firm ground to tread upon; and this faith alone furnishes. It lifts the soul up to the firm advanced ground of the promises, and fastens it there; and there it is sure, even *as Mount Zion, that can not be removed.* He says not, steadfast by your own resolutions and purposes, but *steadfast by faith.* The power of God, by faith becomes ours; for that is contained and engaged in the word of promise. Faith lays hold there, and there finds Almighty strength. *And this is our victory*, says the apostle St. John, *whereby we overcome the world even our faith.* 1 John v. 4. So faith is our victory, whereby we overcome *the prince of this world. Whom resist, steadfast in the faith.* And, universally, all difficulties, and all enemies, are overcome by *faith.* Faith sets the stronger *Lion of the tribe of Judah*, against this *roaring lion* of the bottomless pit; that delivering Lion, against this devouring lion.

When the soul is surrounded with enemies on all hands, so that there is no way of escape, faith flies above them, and carries up the soul to take refuge in Christ, and is there safe. That is the power of faith; it sets a soul in Christ, and there it looks down upon all temptations as at the bottom of the rock, breaking themselves into foam. When the floods of temptation rise and gather, so great and so many, that the soul is even ready to be swallowed up, then, by faith, it says, Lord Jesus, thou art my strength, I look to thee for deliverance; now appear for my help! And thus it overcomes. The guilt of sin is answered by his blood, the power of sin is conquered by his Spirit; and afflictions that arise are nothing to these: his love and gracious presence make them sweet and easy.

We mistake, if we think to do anything, or to be anything without him; and we mistake again, if we think anything too hard to be done or suffered with him. *Without me you can do nothing*, says he, John xv. 5; and *I am able do all things*, says the apostle, or *can all things*, πάντα ἰσχύω (so the word is), *through Christ that strengthens me.* Phil. iv. 13. All things! Oh, that is a big word, yet it is a true word; and thus made good—through Christ empowering me; that frees it both from falsehood and vanity. An humble confidence, for it is not in himself, but in Christ; and this boasting is good. *My soul shall make her boast in God*, says David, Psalm xxxiv. 2. Oh, they alone have warrant to boast and to triumph, even before the victory, who do it in this style! Such may give a challenge to all the world, to all adverse powers of earth and hell, as the apostle doth in his own and every believer's name, Rom. viii. 35, 38: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* &c. See the victory recorded in this same way, Apoc. xii. 11: *And they overcame him*—but how?—*by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.* That blood, and the word of their testimony, believing that word concerning that blood, these are the strength and victory of a Christian.

*Inf.* Although, then, thou seest thyself the most witless and weak, and findest thyself nothing but a prey to the powers of darkness, yet know that, by believing, the wisdom and strength of Christ are thine. Thou art, and oughtest to find thyself, all weakness; but he is all strength, Almightiness itself. Learn to apply his victory, and so it is thine. Be strong—how?—*in him, and the power of his might.* But thou wilt say, I am often foiled, yea, I can not find that I prevail at all against mine enemies, but they still against me. Yet rely on him: he can turn the chase in an instant. Still cleave to him. When the whole powers of thy soul are, as it were, scattered and routed, rally them by believing. Draw thou but unto the standard of Jesus Christ, and the day shall be thine; for victory follows that standard, and can not be severed from it. Yea, though thou find the smart of divers strokes, yet, think that often a wounded soldier hath won the day. Believe, and it shall be so with thee.

And remember that thy defeats, through the wisdom and love of thy God, may be ordered to advance the victory; to put courage and holy anger into thee against thine enemies; to humble thee, and drive thee from from thine own imagined strength, to make use of his real strength. And be not hasty; think not at the very first to conquer. Many a hard conflict must thou resolve upon, and often shalt thou be brought very low, almost to a desperate point, to thy sense, past recovery; then it is his time to step in, even in the midst of their prevailing. *Let God* but *arise, and his enemies shall be scattered.* Psalm lxviii. 1. Thus the church hath found it in her greatest extremities, and thus likewise the believing soul.

*Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.*] There is one thing that much trou-

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bles the patience and weakens the faith, of some Christians; they are ready to think there is no one, yea that that there never was any one beloved of God, in such a condition as theirs. Thus sometimes they swell even their outward trials in imagination, but oftener their inward ones, which are most heavy and pressing to themselves, and the parallel of them in others least discernible by them. Therefore the apostle St. Paul breaks this conceit, 1 Cor. x. 13. *No temptation hath taken you, but such as is common to men.* And here is the same truth, *The same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren.*

But we had rather hear of ease, and can not, after all that is said, bring our hearts to comply with this, that temptations and troubles are the saints' portion here, and that this is the royal way to the kingdom. Our King led it, and all his followers go the same way; and besides the happy end of it, is it not sweet, even for this, simply, because he went in it? Yet, this is the truth, and, taken altogether, is a most conformable truth: the whole brotherhood, *all our brethren*, go in it, and our Eldest Brother went first.

VER. 10. But the God of all grace who hath called us unto his eternal joy by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

HIS divine doctrine and exhortations, the apostle closes with prayer, as we follow his rule in public after the word preached. So St. Paul frequently did, and so Christ himself, John xvii., after that sermon in the preceding chapters. It were well if both ministers and people would follow the same way more in private, each for themselves, and each for the other. The want of this is mainly the thing that makes our preaching and hearing so barren and fruitless. The ministers of the gospel should indeed be as the angels of God, going between him and his people; not only bringing down useful instructions from God to them, but putting up earnest supplications to God for them. In the tenth chapter of St. Luke, the disciples are sent forth and appointed to preach; and in the eleventh, we have them desiring to be taught to pray; *Lord teach us to pray.* And without this, there can be little answer or success in the other; little springing up of this seed, though ministers sow it plentifully in preaching, unless they secretly water it with their prayers and their tears.

And people, truly, should keep some correspondence in this duty, and that, if other obligation will not persuade, even for their own advantage; for it returns unto them with abundant interest. If much of the Spirit be poured forth on ministers, are they not the more able to unfold the spiritual mysteries of the gospel, and to build up their people in the knowledge of them? Oh, that both of us were more abundant in this rich and sweet exercise!

*But the God of all grace, who hath called us to eternal glory by Christ Jesus.*] This prayer suits the apostle St. Paul's word, in his direction to the Philippians (chap. iv. 6), it is *supplication with thanksgiving*, prayer with praise. In the prayer or petition, consider, 1st, the matter, and 2dly, the style.

The matter, or thing requested, is expressed in divers brief words, *Make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you;* which, though they be much of the same sense, yet are not superfluously multiplied, for they carry both the great importance of the thing, and the earnest desire in asking it. And though it be a little light and unsolid, to frame a different sense to each of them (nor are any of the ways that such interpreters have taken in it, very satisfactory to any discerning judgment); yet I conceive they are not altogether without some profitable difference. The first [*perfect*], implies, more clearly than the rest, their advancement in victory over their remaining corruptions and infirmities, and their progress toward perfection. *Stablish*, hath more express reference to both the inward lightness and inconstancy that are natural to us, and the counterblasts of persecutions and temptations, outward oppositions; and it imports the curing of the one, and support against the other. *Strengthen*, has respect to the growth of their graces, especially the gaining of further measures of those graces wherein they are weakest and lowest. And *settle*, though it seems the same, and in substance is the same with the other word, *stablish*, yet it adds somewhat to it very worthy of consideration; for it signifies, to found or fix upon a sure foundation, and so, indeed, may have an aspect to him who is the foundation and strength of believers, on whom they build by faith, even *Jesus Christ*, in whom we have all, both victory over sin, and increase of grace, and establishment of spirit, and power to persevere against all difficulties and assaults. He is that *corner foundation-stone laid in Zion, that they that build upon him may not be ashamed*, Isa xxviii. 16; that *Rock* that upholds the house founded on it, in the midst of all winds and storms. Matt. vii. *ult.*

*Observe:* 1*st*, These expressions have in them that which is primarily to be sought after by every Christian, *perseverance* and *progress* in grace. These two are here interwoven; for there be two words importing the one, and two the other, and they are interchangeably placed. This is often urged on Christians as their duty, and accordingly ought they to apply themselves to it, and use their highest diligence in it; not to take the beginning of Christianity for the end of it, to think it enough, if they are entered into the way of it, and to sit down upon the entry; but to walk on, to *go from strength to strength*, and even through the greatest difficulties and discouragements, to pass forward with unmoved stability and fixedness of mind. They ought to be aiming at perfection. It is

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true, we shall still fall exceedingly short of it; but the more we study it, the nearer shall we come to it; the higher we aim, the higher shall we shoot, though we shoot not so high as we aim.

It is an excellent life, and it is the proper life of a Christian, to be daily outstripping himself, to be spiritually wiser, holier, more heavenly-minded to-day than yesterday, and to-morrow (if it be added to his life) than to-day; *Suavissima vita est indies sentire se fieri meliorem:* every day loving the world less, and Christ more, than on the former, and gaining every day some further victory over his secret corruptions; having his passions more subdued and mortified, his desires in all temporal things more cool and indifferent, and in spiritual things, more ardent; that miserable lightness of spirit cured, and his heart rendered more solid and fixed upon God, aspiring to more near communion with him, and laboring that particular graces may be made more lively and strong, by often exercising and stirring them up; faith more confirmed and stayed, love more inflamed, composed meekness producing more deep humility. Oh, this were a worthy ambition indeed! You would have your estates growing, and your credit growing; how much rather should you seek to have your graces growing, and not be content with anything you have attained to!

*Obs.* 2*d*. But all our endeavors and diligence in this will be vain, unless we look for our perfecting and establishing from that *right hand*, without which we can do nothing. Thither the apostle moves his desires for his brethren, and so teaches them the same address for themselves: *The God of all grace make you perfect.*

This prayer is grounded (as all prayer of faith must be) on the promise and covenant of God. He *is our rock, and his work is perfect.* Deut. xxxii. 4. He doth not begin a building, and then leave it off: none of his designs break in the middle, or fall short of their end. *He will perfect that good work which he hath begun, to the day of Jesus Christ.* Phil. i. 6. And how often is he called the *strength of those that trust in him, their buckler, and his way perfect.* Psalm xviii. 30.

Hence is the stability of grace, the perseverance of the saints; it is founded upon his unchangeableness. Not that they are unchangeable, though truly sanctified, if they and their graces were left to their own management: no, it is he who not only gives that rich portion to those he adopts to be his children, but keeps it for them, and them in the possession of it. He *maintains the lot of our inheritance.* Psalm xvi. 5. And to build that persuasion of perseverance upon his truth and power engaged in it, is no presumption; yea, it is high dishonor to him to question it.

But when nature is set to judge of grace, it must speak according to itself, and therefore very unsuitably to that which it speaks of. Natural wits apprehend not the spiritual tenor of the covenant of grace, but model it to their own principles, and disguise it: they think of nothing but their resolves and moral purposes; or if they take up with some confused notion of grace, they imagine it put into their own hands, to keep or to lose it, and will not stoop to a continual dependance on the strength of Another, rather choosing that game of hazard, though it is certain loss and undoing, to do for themselves.

But the humble believer is otherwise taught; he *hath not so learned Christ.* He sees himself beset with enemies without, and buckled to a treacherous heart within, that will betray him to them; and he dares no more trust himself to himself, than to his most professed enemies. Thus it ought to be, and the more the heart is brought to this humble petitioning for that ability, and strengthening, and perfecting, from God, the more shall it find both stability, and peace from the assurance of that stability.

And certainly, the more the Christian is acquainted with himself, the more will he go out of himself for his perfecting and establishing. He finds that when he thinks to go forward, he is driven backward, and that sin gets hold of him, oftentimes when he thought to have smitten it. He finds that such is the miserable inconstancy of his heart in spiritual things, the vanishing of his purposes and breaking off of his thoughts, that they usually die ere they be brought forth: so that when he hath thought, I will pray more reverently, and set myself to behold God when I speak to him, and watch more over my heart that it fly not out and leave me—possibly the first time he sets to it, thinking to be master of his intention, he finds himself more scattered, and disordered, and dead, than at any time before. When he hath conceived thoughts of humility and self-abasement, and thinks, "Now I am down, and laid low within myself, to rise and look big no more"—some vain fancy creeps in anon, and encourages him, and raises him up to his old estate; so that in this plight, had he not higher strength to look at, he would sit down and give over all, as utterly hopeless of ever attaining to his journey's end.

But when he considers whose work that is within him, even these small beginnings of desires, he is encouraged by the greatness of the work, not to despise and despair of the small appearance of it in its beginning, *not to despise the day of small things,* Zech. iv. 10; and knowing that it is *not by any power, nor by might, but by his Spirit,* that it shall be accomplished, he lays hold on that word, *Though thy beginning be small, yet thy latter end shall greatly increase.* Job. viii. 7.

The believer *looks to Jesus,* [ἀφορωντες], Heb. xii. 2—*looks off* from all oppositions and difficulties, *looks* above them *to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; author,* and therefore *finisher.* Thus, that royal dignity

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is interested in the maintenance and completion of what he hath wrought. Notwithstanding all thy imperfections, and the strength of sin, he can and will subdue it. Notwithstanding thy condition is so light and loose, that it were easy for any wind of temptation to blow thee away, yet he shall hold thee in his right hand, and there thou shalt be firm as the earth, that is so settled by his hand, that though it hangs by nothing, yet nothing can remove it. Though thou art weak, he is strong; and it is *he that strengthens thee, and renews thy strength*, Isa. xl. 28: when it seems to be gone and quite spent, he makes it fresh, and greater than ever before. The word here rendered *renew*, signifies *change:* they shall have, for their own, his strength. A weak believer, and his strong Savior, will be too hard for all that can rise against them. It is here fit, as in statutes, *hominem cum basi metiri*, to measure the man with the basis on which he stands; and there is no taking the right measure of a Christian but in that way.

Thou art now, indeed, exposed to great storms and tempests, but he builds thee on himself, makes thee, by believing, to found on him; and so, though the winds blow and the rain fall, yet thou standest, being built on him, thy rock. And this, indeed, is our safety, the more we cleave to our Rock and fasten on him. This is the only thing that *establishes* us, and *perfects*, and *strengthens* us; therefore, well is that word added, θεμελιώσαι, *found* you, or *settle* you, on your foundation. This is the firmness of the church against the gates of hell; he is a strong foundation for its establishment, and a living foundation, having influence into the building, for perfecting it; for it is a living house, and the foundation is a root sending life into the stones, so that *they grow up*, as this apostle speaks, ch. ii. 4.

It is the inactivity of faith on Jesus, that keeps us so imperfect, and wrestling still with our corruptions, without any advancement. We wrestle in our own strength too often, and so are justly, yea, necessarily, foiled; it can not be otherwise till we make him our strength. This we are still forgetting, and had need to be put in mind of, and ought frequently to remind ourselves. We would be at doing for ourselves, and insensibly fall into this folly, even after much smarting for it, if we be not watchful against it. There is this wretched natural independency in us, that is so hard to beat out. All our projectings are but castles in the air, imaginary buildings without a foundation, till once laid on Christ. But never shall we find heart-peace, sweet peace, and progress in holiness, till we be driven from it, to make him all our strength; till we be brought to do nothing, to attempt nothing, to hope or expect nothing, but in him; and then shall we indeed find his fulness and all-sufficiency, and *be more than conquerors through him who hath loved us.*

*But the God of all grace.*] By reason of our many wants and great weakness, we had need to have a very full hand and a very strong hand to go to for our supplies and for support. And such we have indeed: our father is the *God of all grace*, a spring that can not be drawn dry, no, nor so much as any whit diminished.

*The God of all grace:* the God of imputed grace, of infused and increased grace, of furnished and assisting grace. The work of salvation is all grace from beginning to end. Free grace in the plot of it, laid in the counsel of God, and performed by his own hand all of it; his Son sent in the flesh, and his Spirit sent into the hearts of his chosen, to apply Christ. All grace is in him, the living spring of it, and flows from him; all the various actings, and all the several degrees of grace. He is the God of pardoning grace, who *blotteth out the transgressions of* his own children, *for his own name's sake* (Isa. xliii. 25), who takes up all quarrels, and makes one act of oblivion serve for all reckonings between him and them. And, as he is the God of pardoning grace, so withal, the God of sanctifying grace, who refines and purifies all those he means to make up into vessels of glory, and hath in his hand all the fit means and ways of doing this; purifies them by afflictions and outward trials, by the reproaches and hatreds of the world. The profane world know little how serviceable they are to the graces and comforts of a Christian, when they dishonor and persecute him; yea, little doth a Christian himself sometimes think how great his advantage is by those things, till he finds it, and wonders at his father's wisdom and love. But most powerfully are the children of God sanctified by the Spirit within them, without which, indeed, no other thing could be of any advantage to them in this. That divine fire kindled within them, is daily refining and sublimating them, that Spirit of Christ conquering sin, and by the mighty flame of his love, consuming the earth and dross that is in them; making their affections more spiritual and disengaged from all creature-delights. And thus, as they receive the beginnings of grace freely, so all the advances and increases of it; life from their Lord still flowing and causing them to grow, abating the power of sin, strengthening a fainting faith, quickening a languishing love, teaching the soul the ways of wounding strong corruptions, and fortifying its weak graces; yea, in wonderful ways advancing the good of his children by things not only harsh to them, as afflictions and temptations, but by what is directly opposite in its nature, sin itself; raising them by their falls, and strengthening them by their very troubles; working them to humility and vigilance, and sending them to Christ for strength, by the experience of their weaknesses and failings.

And as he is the God of pardoning grace and of sanctifying grace in the beginning and

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growth of it, so also the God of supporting grace, of that supervenient influence without which the graces placed within us would lie dead, and fail us in the time of greatest need. This is the immediate assisting power that bears up the soul under the hardest service, and backs it in the sharpest conflicts, communicating fresh auxiliary strength, when we, with all the grace we have dwelling within us, are surcharged.

Then he steps in, and opposes his strength to a prevailing and confident enemy, that is at the point of insulting and triumph. When temptations have made a breach, and enter with full force and violence, he lets in so much present help on a sudden, as makes them give back, and beats them out. *When the enemy comes in as a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard against him.* Isa. lix. 11. And no siege can be so close as to keep out this aid, for it comes from above.

And by this, a Christian learns that his strength is in God; whereas, if his received grace were always party enough, and able to make itself good against all incursions, though we know we have received it, yet being within us, we should possibly sometimes forget the receipt of it, and look on it more as ours than as his; more as being within us, than as flowing from him. But when all the forces we have, the standing garrison, are by far overmatched, and yet we find the assailants beaten back, then we must acknowledge him who sends such seasonable relief, to be, as the psalmist speaks, *a very present help in trouble.* Psalm xlvi. 1.

All St. Paul's constant strength of grace inherent in him, could not fence him so well, as to ward off the piercing point of that sharp temptation, whatsoever it was, which he records, 2 Cor. xii. 7. The redoubled buffetings that he felt, came so thick upon him, that he was driven to his knees by it to cry for help to be sent down, without which he found he could not hold out; and he had an answer assuring him of help, a secret support that should maintain them: "*My grace is sufficient for thee:*" *q. d.*, "Though thine own be not, that is, the grace which I have already given thee, yet *mine* is, that is, the grace which is in me, and which I will put forth for thy assistance."

And this is our great advantage and comfort, that we have a Protector who is almighty, and who is always at hand, who can and will hear us whensoever we are beset and straitened. That captain had reason, who, on being required to keep Milan for the king of France, went up to the highest turret, and cried out three times, "King of France," and then refused the service, because the king heard him not, and nobody answered for him; meaning to imply the great distance, and so the difficulty of sending aid, when need should require. But we may be confident of our supplies in the most sudden surprisals. Our King can, and will hear us when we call, and will send relief in due season. We may be in apparent hazards, but we shall not be wholly vanquished: it is but crying to him in our greatest straits, and help appears. Possibly we see the hosts of enemies first, and that so great that there is no likelihood of escaping, but then, praying, we espy the fiery chariots and horsemen, and may say, *There are more with us than with them.* 2 Kings vi. 16.

The apostle St. Paul calls our God, *the God of all consolation*, Rom. xv. 5, as here he is styled *the God of all grace.* And this is our rejoicing, that in his hand is all good, our sanctification and consolation, assistance and assurance, *grace and glory.* And this style suits most fitly with the present petition, that for our *perfecting, and stablishing, and strengthening in grace*, we have recourse to *the God of all grace*, whose former gifts do not discourage us from seeking more, but indeed both encourage us, and engage him for the perfecting of it. It is his will, that we have constant recourse to him for all we want. He is so rich, and withal so liberal, that he delights in our seeking and drawing much from him; and it is by believing and praying, that we do draw from him. Were these plied, we should soon grow richer. But remember, all this grace that we would receive from the God of all grace, must be from *God in Christ.* There it flows for us, and thither we are directed. *It was the Father's good pleasure, that in him should all fulness dwell*, Col. i. 19, and that *for us*, that we might know whither to go, and where to apply for it.

Now, for the further opening up of his riches, expressed in this title, *the God of all grace*, there is added one great act of grace, which doth indeed include all the rest, for we have in it the beginning and the end of the work linked together; the first effect of grace upon us, in *effectual calling*, and the last accomplishment of it, in *eternal glory. Who hath called us to his eternal glory.*

This *calling*, I conceive, doth not simply mean the design of the gospel in its general publication, wherein the outward call lies, that it holds forth, and sets before us, eternal glory as the result of grace; but refers to the real bringing of a Christian to Christ, and uniting him with Christ, and so giving him a real and firm title to glory,—such a call, as powerfully works grace in the soul, and secures glory to the soul; gives it a right to that inheritance, and fits it for it; and sometimes gives it even the evident and sweet assurance of it. This assurance, indeed, all the heirs of glory have not ordinarily within them, and scarcely any have at all times equally clear. Some travel on in a covert, cloudy day, and get home by it, having so much light as to know their way, and yet do not at all clearly see the bright and full sunshine of assurance; others have it breaking forth at times, and anon under a cloud; and some have it more constant-

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ly. But as all meet in the end, so all agree in this in the beginning, that is, in the reality of the thing; they are made unalterably sure heirs of it, in their effectual calling.

And by this the apostle advances his petition for their support, and establishment, and advancement in the way of grace. The way of our calling to so high and happy an estate, did we apply our thoughts more to it, would work on us, and persuade us to a more suitable temper of mind, and course of life; would give us more noble and sublime thoughts, and ways above the world; and the stronger were our persuasion of it, the more strongly should we be thus persuaded by it. And as it would thus prevail with us, so might we use it to prevail with God for all needful grace.

All you who hear the gospel, are, in the general, called to this glory. It is told you where and how you may lay hold on it. You are told, that if you will let go your sins and embrace Jesus Christ, this glory shall be yours. It is his purchase, and the right of it lies in him, and not elsewhere; and the way to obtain a right to him is to receive him for a Savior, and at the same time for Lord and King; to become his subjects, and so to be made kings. This is our message to you, but you will not receive it. You give it a hearing, it may be, but do not indeed hearken to the motion; and this, of necessity, must proceed from unbelief. Were you indeed persuaded, that in coming unto Christ you were immediately not only set free from a sentence of death, which is still standing over your head while you are out of him, but withal entitled to a crown, made heirs of a kingdom, an eternal kingdom,—I say, if this were believed, were it possible to slight him as the most do, and turn back the bargain, and bestow their money elsewhere upon trifles of no value, children's commodities, rattles, and painted toys? Such are your greatest projects, even for earthly kingdoms, in respect of Christ, and this glory provided in him. How wonderful is it that where this happiness is daily proclaimed, and you are not only informed of it, but entreated to receive it, not only is it offered to you, but pressed and urged upon you, and you say you believe the matter: yet still, the false glory and other vanities of this world amuse and entangle you, so that you close not with this rich offer of *eternal glory*.

But where any do close with it, it is indeed by a call that goes deeper than the ear, a word spoken home to within, a touch of the Spirit of God upon the heart, which hath a magnetic virtue to draw it, so that it can not choose but follow, and yet chooses it most freely and sweetly; doth most gladly open to let in Jesus Christ and his sweet government upon his own terms, takes him and all the reproaches and troubles that come with him. And well it may, seeing, beyond a little passing trouble, abiding, eternal glory.

The state to which a Christian is called, is not a poor and sad estate, as the world judges; it is to no less than *eternal glory*. The world think it strange to see the believer abridge himself in the delights of sin, their common pursuits and eager graspings after gains, or honors, or pleasures of sense; but they know not the infinite gain that he hath made, in that he hath exchanged this dross for down-weight of pure gold. The world see what the Christian leaves, but they see not what he comes to, what his new purchase is, in another place; they see what he suffers, but not what he expects, and shall attain as the end of those sufferings, which shall shortly end. But he, knowing well upon what conditions all these things run, may well say, *Non magna relinquo magna sequor*—How small is what I forsake, how great that which I follow after!

It is glory, eternal glory, *his eternal glory*, true, real glory. All here that is so named, is no more than a name, a shadow of glory; it can not endure the balance, but is found too light, as was said of a great monarch, Dan. v.; and even many principalities and provinces, put into the scale one after another, still add no weight: yea, possibly, as a late political writer wittily observes of a certain monarch, "the more kingdoms you cast in, the scale is still the lighter." Men are naturally desirous after glory, and gape after it; but they are naturally ignorant of the true nature and place of it: they seek it where it is not, and, as Solomon says of riches, *set their hearts on that which is not*, Prov. xxiii. 5—hath no subsistence or reality. But the glory above, is true, real glory, and bears weight, and so bears aright the name of glory, the term for which in the Hebrew [*Kebud*] signifies *weight*; and the apostle's expression seems to allude to that sense: speaking of this same glory to come, he calls it *a far more excellent weight of glory*. 2 Cor. iv. 17. It weighs down all labor and sufferings in the way, so far, as that they are not once worth the speaking of in respect of it. It is the *hyperbole* καθ' ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν. Other glory is over-spoken, but this glory is over-glorious to be duly spoken: it exceeds and rises above all that can be spoken of it.

*Eternal.*] Oh, that adds much! Men would have more reason so to affect and pursue the glory of the present world, such as it is, if it were lasting, if it stayed with them when they have caught it, and they stayed with it to enjoy it. But how soon do they part! They pass away, and the glory passes away, both as smoke. Our life itself is as a vapor. And as for all the pomp and magnificence of those that have the greatest outward glory, and make the fairest show, it is but a show, a *pageant* that goes through the street, and is seen no more. But this hath length of days with it—*eternal glory*. Oh, a thought of that swallows up all the grandeur of the world, and the noise of reckoning years and ages. Had one man continued, from the creation to the end of the world, at the top of

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earthly dignity and glory, admired by all, yet, at the end, everlasting oblivion being the close, what a nothing were it to *eternal glory!* But, alas! we can not be brought to believe, and deeply to take the impression of eternity; and this is our undoing.

*By Jesus Christ.*] Your portion, while out of him, was eternal shame and misery, but *by* him, it is even all glory. And this hath in it likewise an evidence of the greatness of this glory; it can be no small estate, which the blood of the Son of God was let out to purchase.

*His glory.*] It is that which he gives, and gives as his choicest of all, to his chosen, his children. And if there be anything here that hath delight or worth, in the things which he gives in common even to his enemies; if there be such a world and such a variety of good things for them that hate him, oh, how excellent must those things be which he hath reserved for his friends, for those he loves, and causes to love him!

As it is his gift, so it is indeed himself; the beholding and enjoying of himself. This we can not now conceive. But, oh, that blessed day when the soul shall be full of God, shall be satisfied and ravished with full vision! Should we not admire that such a condition is provided for man, wretched, sinful man? *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him?* Psalm viii. 3. And is it provided for me, as wretched as any who are left and fallen short of this glory, a base worm taken out of the mire, and washed in the blood of Christ, and within a while set to shine in glory without sin! Oh, the wonder of this! How should it excite us to praise, when we think of such a one there, who will bring us up in the way to this crown! How will this hope sweeten the short sufferings of this life! And death itself, which is otherwise the bitterest in itself, is most of all sweetened by this, as being nearest it, and setting us into it. What though thou art poor, diseased, and despised here? Oh, consider what is there, how worthy the affection, worthy the earnest eye and fixed look of an heir of this glory! What can he either desire or fear, whose heart is thus deeply fixed? Who would refuse this other clause, *to suffer a while*, a little while, anything outward or inward which he thinks fit? How soon shall all this be overpast, and then overpaid in the very entry, at the beginning of this glory that shall never end!

VER. 11. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

THEY know little of their own wants and emptiness, who are not much in prayer; and they know little of the greatness and goodness of God, who are not much in praises. The humble Christian hath a heart in some measure framed to both. He hath within him the best schoolmaster, who teaches him how to pray, and how to praise, and makes him delight in the exercise of them both.

The apostle, having added prayer to his doctrine, adds here, you see, praise to his prayer. *To him be glory and dominion for ever.*

The living praises of God spring from much holy affection, and that affection springs from a Divine light in the understanding. So says the psalmist: *Sing ye praises with understanding*, or, *you that have understanding.* Psalm xlvii. 7. It is a spiritual knowledge of God, that sets the soul in tune for his praises, and therefore the most can bear no part in this song: they mistune it quite, through their ignorance of God, and unacquaintance with him. Praise is unseemly in the mouth of fools: they spoil and mistune it.

Observe, 1. The thing ascribed. 2. The term or endurance of it. The former is expressed in two words: *glory, and power. Glory*, that is, the shining forth of his dignity, the knowledge and acknowledgment of it by his creatures; that his excellency may be confessed and praised, his name exalted; that service and homage may be done to him. Which all add nothing to him, for how can that be? But as it is the duty of such creatures as he hath fitted for it, to render praise to him, so it is their happiness. All created things, indeed, declare and speak his glory: the heavens sound it forth, and the earth and sea resound and echo it back. But his reasonable creatures hath he peculiarly framed, both to take notice of his glory in all the rest and to return it from and for all the rest, in a more express and lively way.

And in this lower world, it is man alone that is made capable of observing the glory of God, and of offering him praises. He expresses it well, who calls man *the world's high priest:* all the creatures bring their oblations of praise to him, to offer up for them and for himself, and for whose use and comfort they are made. The light and motion of the heavens, and all the variety of creatures below them, speak this to man: He that made us and you, and made us for you, is great, and wise, and worthy to be praised. And you are better able to say this than we; therefore praise him on our behalf and on your own. Oh! he is great and mighty, he is the Lord our Maker.

*Power* here expresses not only ability, but authority and royal sovereignty; that, as he can do all things, he rules and governs all things, is King of all the world, Lord paramount. All hold their crowns of him, and *the shields of the earth belong unto God; he is greatly to be exalted*, Psalm xlvii. 9. He disposeth of states and kingdoms at his pleasure, establisheth or changeth, turns and overturns, as seems him good; and hath not only might, but right to do so. *He is the Most High, ruling in the kingdoms of the children of men, and giving them to whomsoever he will*, Daniel iv. 32, pouring contempt upon princes when they contemn his power.



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The term of this glory is *for ever*. Even in the short life of man, men who are raised very high in place and popular esteem may, and often do, outlive their own glory. But the glory of God lasteth as long as himself, for he is unchangeable: his throne is *for ever*, and his wrath *for ever*, and his mercy *for ever*; and therefore his glory *for ever*.

*Reflection* 1. Is it not to be lamented, that he is so little glorified and praised? that the earth, being so full of his goodness, is so empty of his praise from them who enjoy and live upon it?

How far are the greatest part from making this their great work, to exalt God, and ascribe power and glory to his name! So far, that all their ways are his dishonor: they seek to advance and raise themselves, to serve their own lusts and pleasures, while they are altogether mindless of his glory. Yea, the apostle's complaint holds good against us all; we are *seeking our own things, and none the things of the Lord Jesus Christ.* Phil. ii. 21. It is true, some exceptions there are; but, as his meaning is, they are so few, that they are, as it were, drowned and smothered in the crowd of self-seekers, so that they appear not. After all the judgments of God upon us, how do luxury and excess, uncleanness, and all kinds profaneness, still outdare the very light of the gospel, and the rule of holiness shining in it! Scarcely anything is a matter of common shame and scorn, but *the power of godliness;* turning indeed our true glory into shame, and glorying in that which is indeed our shame. Holiness is not only our truest glory, but that wherein the ever-glorious God doth especially glory. He hath made known himself particularly by that name, *The holy God;* and the express style of his glorious praises uttered by *seraphims*, is, *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.* Isa. vi. 3.

Instead of sanctifying and glorifying this holy name, how doth the language of hell, oaths and curses, abound in our streets and houses! How is that blessed name, which angels are blessing and praising, abused by base worms! Again, notwithstanding all the mercies multiplied upon us in this land, where are our praises, our songs of deliverance, our ascribing glory and power to our God, who hath prevented us with loving kindness and tender mercies; hath removed the strokes of his hand, and made cities and villages populous again, that were left desolate without inhabitants?

Oh, why do we not stir up our hearts, and one another, to extol the name of our God, and say, *Give unto the Lord glory and strength; give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name?* Have we not seen the pride and glory of all flesh stained and abased? Were there ever affairs and times that more discovered the folly and weakness of men, and the wisdom and power of God? Oh, that our hearts were set to magnify him, according to that word so often repeated in Psalm cvii. *Oh! that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, for his wonderful works to the children of men!*

*Reflection* 2. But what wonder is it that the Lord loses the revenue of his praises at the hands of the common ungodly world, when even his own people fall so far behind it as usually they do? *The dead can not praise him;* but that they whom he hath quickened by his Spirit, should yet be so surprised with deadness and dulness as to this exercise of exalting God, this is very strange. For help of this, take the three following directions:—

*Direction* 1. We should seek after a fit temper, and labor to have our hearts brought to a due disposition for his praises. And in this view, [1.] See that they be spiritual. All spiritual services require that, but this service most, as being indeed the most spiritual of all. Affection to the things of this earth, draws down the soul, and makes it so low set, that it can not rise to the height of a song of praise; and thus, if we observed ourselves, we should find that when we let our hearts fall and entangle themselves in any inferior desires and delights, as they are unfitted generally for holy things, so, especially for the praises of our holy God. Creature-loves debase the soul, and turn it to earth, and praise is altogether heavenly.

[2.] Seek a heart purified from self-love, and possessed with the love of God. The heart which is ruled by its own interest is scarcely ever content, still subject to new disquiet. Self is a vexing thing, for all things do not readily suit our humors and wills, and the least touch that is wrong to a selfish mind distempers it, and disrelishes all the good things about it. A childish condition it is, if crossed but in a toy, to throw away all. Whence are our frequent frettings and grumblings, and why is it that we can drown a hundred high favors in one little displeasure, so that still our finger is upon that string, and there is more malcontent and repining for one little cross, than praises for all the mercies we have received? Is not this evidently from the self-love that abounds in us? Whereas, were the love of God predominant in us, we should love his doings and disposals, and bless his name in all. Whatsoever were his will, would, in that view, be amiable and sweet to us, however in itself harsh and unpleasant. Thus should we say in all: This is the will and the hand of my Father, who doth all things wisely and well: blessed be his name!

The soul thus framed, would praise in the deeps of troubles: not only in outward afflictions, but in the saddest inward condition, it would be still extolling God, and saying, However he deal with me, he is worthy to be loved and praised. He is great and holy, he is good and gracious; and whatsoever be his

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way and thoughts toward me, I wish him glory. If he will be pleased to give me light and refreshment, blessed be he; and if he will have me to be in darkness again, blessed be he, glory to his name! Yea, what though he should utterly reject me, is he not for that to be accounted infinitely merciful in the saving of others? Must he cease to be praiseworthy for my sake? If he condemn, yet he is to be praised, being merciful to so many others; yea, even in so dealing with me, he is to be praised, for in that he is just.

Thus would pure love reason for him, and render praise to him. But our ordinary way is most untoward and unbeseeming his creatures, even the best of them, much more such worms as we are; that things must rather be to our mind than his, and we must either have all our will, or else, for our part, he shall have none of his praises.

[3.] Labor for that which on these two will follow, a *fixed heart*. If it be refined from creature-love, and self-love, spirituality and love of God will fix it; and then shall it be fit to praise, which an unstable, uncomposed heart can never be, any more than an instrument can be harmonious and fit to play on, that hath loose pins, still slipping and letting down the strings, pins that never fasten. And thus are the most: they can not fix to divine thoughts, to consider God, to behold and admire his excellency and goodness, and his free love. Oh, that happy word of David, worthy to be twice repeated! When shall we say it? *O God, my heart is fixed:* well might he add, *I will sing and give praise.* Psalm lvii. 7. Oh, that we would pray much that he would fix our hearts, and then, he having fixed them, we should praise him much.

*Direct.* II. If any due disposition be once attained for praises, then must the heart, so disposed, be set to study the matter of praises.

And 1. Study the infinite excellency of God in himself; of which, though we know little, yet this we know, and should consider it, that it is far beyond what all the creatures and all his works are able to testify of him; that he transcends all we can speak, or hear, or know of him. 2. Look on him in his works. Can we behold the vast heavens above, or the firm earth beneath us, or all the variety of his works in both, without holy wonder excited in us, and that stirring us up to sing praises? Oh, his greatness, and might, and wisdom shining in these! *Lord, how manifest are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all.* Psalm civ. 24. But above all, that work, that marvel of his works, the sending of his Son forth of his bosom. This is the mystery which the apostles do so much magnify in their writings, which is so much magnified in this epistle, and which forms the chief incentive to the ascription of praise with which it closes. This praise looks particularly back to the style in the prayer, *The God of all grace, who hath called us to his eternal glory by Jesus Christ.* So many other mercies are not to be forgotten, but chiefly is he to be praised for that choicest of mercies. *To his glory, who hath called us to his glory.* Then, look through the work of saving his chosen, so redeemed by the blood of his Son. His maintaining his own work in them against all surrounding enemies and oppositions, the advancing of it in the midst of them, and even by means of those oppositions, and bringing them safe to glory; that *perfecting* and *establishment*, as in the foregoing words. It is this which so affects the apostle in the very entry of this epistle, that there he must break forth into praise: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,* chap. i. 3. He begins there in praise, and here he ends in it, and so encloses all within that divine circle. And as we should consider these things in general, so should we also reflect on his particular dealing with us, his good providence both in spirituals and temporals. Would we search, oh, what a surcharge of innumerable mercies should each of us find! And were we better acquainted with the holy Scriptures, had we more our delight in them, they would acquaint us better with all these things, and give us light to see them, and warm our hearts, and excite them to his praises, who is the God of all our mercies.

*Direct.* III. The heart being somewhat disposed to praise, and then studying the matter of it, should be applied actually to render praise. And in order to this, we must be careful, 1. To aim at God in all, which is continued praise; to eye his glory in everything, and chiefly to desire that, as our great end, that his name may be exalted. This is *the excellent way* indeed. Whereas most are either wholly for their self-ends, or often squinting out to them. That soul is most noble, which singly and fixedly aims at exalting God, and seeks to have this stamp on all it speaks and does, and desires: All to the greater glory of my God. 2. To abound in the express and solemn return of praise this way. *To him be glory,* not a customary dead saying of it over, as is usual with us, but the heart offering it up. What is so pure and high as this exercise, the praises of ever-glorious Deity? What is heaven but these? And were it not best, as we can, to begin it here, and long to be there, where it shall never end? *To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.* Amen.

VER. 12. By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you (as I suppose), I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.

VER. 13. The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus, my son.

VER. 14. Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus Amen.

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THIS is a kind of postscript, and contains a testimony of the bearer, and the apostolic form of saluting. Withal, the apostle expresses the measure of his writing, that it was *brief*, and the end of it, *that it was to testify the true grace of God.* And this is, indeed, the end of our preaching, and we ought each to seek it by the word, and by mutual exhortations; and sometimes a few words may avail much to this purpose, to our hearty establishment in the faith. And not only are we to believe, but to remember that we have the best of it; that there is truth in our hopes, and they shall not deceive us. They are no fancy, as the world thinks, *but the true grace of God;* yea, when all things else shall vanish, their truth shall most appear in their full accomplishment.

The entertainment and increase of Christian love, of due esteem one of another, and affection one to another, is no matter of empty compliment, but is the very stamp and badge of Jesus Christ upon his followers; it is, therefore, most carefully to be preserved entire, and unhappy are they that do by any means willingly break it. Oh, let us beware of doing so, and *follow peace*, even when it seems to fly from us!

This *peace* that is the portion of those in Christ, is indeed within them, and with God. But through him, it is likewise *one with another*, and in that notion it is to be desired and wished jointly with the other.

They that are in Christ are the only children and heirs of true peace. Others may dream of it, and have a false peace for a time, and wicked men may wish it to themselves and one another; but it is a most vain hope, and will come to naught. But to wish it to them that are in Christ hath good ground; for all solid peace is founded on him, and flows from him. *Now, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds, through Jesus Christ.* Amen.

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# MEDITATIONS

## CRITICAL AND PRACTICAL

ON

# PSALMS IV., XXXII., AND CXXX.

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN OF ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON, BY THE REV. DR. PHILIP DODDRIDGE,

## MEDITATIONS ON PSALM IV.

TITLE, *To the chief Musician on Neginoth, a Psalm of David.*

MANY of the calamities of good men look like miseries, which yet, on the whole, appear to have conduced greatly to their happiness; witness the many prayers which they poured out in those calamities, the many seasonable and shining deliverances which succeeded them, and the many hymns of praise they sang to God their deliverer; so that they seem to have been cast into the fire on purpose that the odor of their graces might diffuse itself abroad.

The seventy Greek interpreters seem to have read the word which we render *to the chief musician*, something different from the reading of our present Hebrew copy, i. e. *Lemenetz*, instead of *Lemenetzoth*; and therefore they render it, εἰς τέλος, as the Latin does, *in finem, to the end.* Whence the Greek and Latin fathers imagined, that all the psalms which bear this inscription refer to the *Messiah*, the great end and the accomplishment of all things; a sentiment which was rather pious than judicious, and led them often to wrest several passages in the psalms by violent and unnatural glosses. Yet I would not morosely reject all interpretations of that kind, seeing the apostles themselves apply to Christ many passages out of the psalms and other books of the Old Testament, which, if we had not been assured of it by their authority, we should hardly have imagined to have had any reference to him. Nor is it probable that they enumerated all the predictions of the Messiah which are to be found in the prophetic writings, but only a very small part of them, while they often assure us that all the sacred writers principally centre in him. And it is certain the passage out of this psalm, which Austin, and some others, suppose to refer to Christ, may be applied to him without any force upon the expression: *O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame?** And what follows they explain with the same reference: *Know that the Lord has in a wonderful manner separated his Holy One unto himself.* Others, however, render the title in a different manner (*Victori*) *to the conqueror.* Moderns translate it *præcentori*, or *præfecto musicæ*, to the chief musician, or him who presided over the band of musicians, which after all seems the most natural interpretation. The word *Neginoth*, which is sometimes rendered *stringed instruments*, did no doubt signify instruments of music which were struck to give their sound, as *Nehiloth*, in the title of Psalm v. seems, though not without some little irregularity in the etymology, to signify *instruments of wind music.* The psalm was written by David, as a summary of the prayer he had poured out before God, when some exceeding great affliction seemed to besiege him on every side, whether it was the persecution of Saul, or the conspiracy of Absalom his son.

VER. 1. Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness! Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress, have mercy upon me and hear my prayer.

*Hear me.*] Behold the sanctuary to which this good man betook himself, in all the afflictions of his life; a sanctuary which therefore he sets off, by accumulating a variety of expressive titles all to the same purpose, Psalm xviii. 1: *My rock, my fortress, my strength, my deliverer, my buckler,* &c. He is indeed a *place of refuge to his children;* and therefore, as Solomon expresses it, Prov. xiv. 26, *In the fear of the Lord is a strong confidence.* There seems something of an enigma in that expression—confidence in fear, yet the thing itself is most true. And again, Prov. xviii. 10, *The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.* And they who know not this Refuge are miserable; and when any danger arises, they run hither and thither, as Anto-

* They read it *gravi corde*, as expressive of the stupidity of heart which the rejecting of Christ and his gospel manifests.

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ninus beautifully expresses it, μυιάων ἱπτομένων διαδρομαῖς, "They fly and flutter they know not whither." The life of man upon earth is a warfare; and it is much better, in the midst of enemies and dangers, to be acquainted with one fortress than with many inns. He that knows how to pray, may be pressed, but can not be overwhelmed.*

*Hear me, O Lord, hear my prayer.*] He did not think it enough to have said this once, but he redoubled it. He who prays indeed, is seriously engaged in the matter; and not only seriously, but vehemently too, and urges the address, because he himself is urged by his necessities and difficulties, and the ardent motion of his own desire and affection. And let it be observed, that these are the only prayers that mount on high, and offer a kind of grateful violence to Heaven. Nor does the Divine goodness grant anything with greater readiness and delight, than the blessings which seem, if I may be allowed the expression, to be forced out and extorted by the most fervent prayer. So that Tertullian used to say, that "when we pray eagerly, we do as it were combine in a resolute band, and lay siege to God himself."† These are the perpetual sacrifices in the temple of God (θυσίαι λογικαὶ), rational victims; prayers and intermingled vows, flowing from an upright and pure heart. But he who presents his petitions coldly seems to bespeak a denial: for is it to be wondered at, that we do not prevail on God to hear our prayers, when we hardly hear them ourselves while we offer them? How can we suppose that such devotions should penetrate heaven, or ascend up to it? How should they ascend, when they do not so much as go forth from our own bosoms, but, like wretched abortives, die in the very birth! But why do I say that they do not go out from the inward recesses of our bosoms! Alas! they are only formed on the surface of our lips, and they expire there, quite different from what Homer ascribes to his wise and eloquent Ulysses, when he says,

> Οπα τε μεγάλην ἐκ στέθεος ἴει.
> Forth from his breast he poured a mighty cry.

*Thou God of my righteousness.*] *q. d.* O God, who art righteous thyself, and art the patron of my righteousness, of my righteous cause and of my righteous life. For it is necessary that both should concur, if we desire to address our prayers to God with any confidence; not that, depending upon this righteousness, we should seek the Divine aid and favor as a matter of just debt; for then, as the apostle argues, *it were no more of grace.* Rom. xi. 6. Our prophet is certainly very far from boasting of his merits; for here he so mentions his righteousness, as at the same time to cast himself upon the Divine mercy; *Have mercy upon me*, exercise thy propitious clemency toward me. And this is indeed the genuine temper of one who truly prays with sincerity and humility. *For polluted hands are an abomination to the Lord, and he hates the heart that is puffed up; he beholds the proud afar off*, as the celebrated parable of the Pharisee and publican, Luke xviii., is (you know) intended to teach us. *Thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.* But *the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and his countenance beholds the upright.* Whereas the words of the wicked, when he prays, are but as a fan, or as a bellows, to blow up the Divine displeasure into a flame; for how can he appease God who does not at all please him, or how can he please who is indeed himself displeased with God, and who utterly disregards his pure laws, and that holiness which is so dear to him?

*Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress.*] I have often experienced both the riches of thy bounty, and the power of thy hand; and I derive confidence thence, because thou art immutable, and canst never be wearied by rescuing thy servants from the dangers that surround them. The examples we have heard of Divine aid granted to others in their distress should animate us; as David recollected, Psalm xxii. 4: *Our fathers trusted in thee, they trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them.* But our own personal experiences are later and nearer, and he who treasures them up in his memory, not only thereby expresses his gratitude to God, but wisely consults his own interest; for he enjoys all those benefits of the Divine favor twice, or rather as often as he needs and pleases to renew the enjoyment of them; and he not only supports his faith in new dangers, by surveying God's former interpositions, but by laying them open before God in humble prayer, he more earnestly implores, and more effectually obtains new ones. By a secret kind of magnetism, he draws one benefit by another; he calls out, and as it were allures the Divine favor by itself.

*Thou hast enlarged me.*] The redeemed of the Lord may especially say so, in reference to that grand and principal deliverance by which they are snatched from the borders of hell, from the jaws of eternal death. The remembrance of so great salvation may well excite songs of perpetual praise, to be ascribed *Deo liberatori*, to God the deliverer; and by this deliverance, so much more illustrious than any of the rest, they may be encouraged in the confidence of faith, to urge and hope for the aids of his saving arm in every other exigence.

One thing more may be observed here, but it is so very obvious that I shall only just mention it, as what needs not be much inculcated, That he who has not been accustomed to prayer when the pleasant gales of prosperity have been breathing upon him, will have little skill and confidence in apply-

* Premi potest, non potest opprimi.
† Precantes veluti stipato agmine Deum obsidere.

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ing himself to it, when the storms of adversity arise; as Xenophon well observed in the person of Cyrus.*

VER. 2. O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? How long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing? Selah.

JUSTLY may we admire the force and the speed with which prayer flies up to heaven, and brings down answers thence, ἅμα ἔπος ἅμα ἔργον, *no sooner said than done;* if not as to the accomplishment of the thing itself, which perhaps may be more opportune in some future hour, yet, at least, in clear, firm hope, and strong confidence, sent from above into a praying soul. Prayer soars above the violence and impiety of men, and with a swift wing commits itself to Heaven, with happy omen, if I may allude to what the learned tell us of the augury of the ancients, which I shall not minutely discuss. Fervent prayers stretch forth a strong, wide-extended wing, and while the birds of night hover beneath, they mount aloft and point out, as it were, the proper seats to which we should aspire. For certainly there is nothing that cuts the air so swiftly, nothing that takes so sublime, so happy, and so auspicious a flight as prayer, which bears the soul on its pinions, and leaves far behind all the dangers, and even the delights of this low world of ours. Behold this holy man, who just before was crying to God in the midst of distress, and with urgent importunity entreating that he might be heard, now, as if he were already possessed of all he had asked, taking upon him boldly to rebuke his enemies, how highly soever they were exalted, and how potent soever they might be even in the royal palace.

*O ye sons of men.*] The Hebrew phrase here used, *Bene Isch*, properly speaking, signifies noble men and great men, as persons of plebeian rank are called *Bene Adam*:† *q. d.* Whoever you are, and however illustrious by birth, or inflated with pride, or perhaps formidable on both accounts, your greatness is false, and when it is most blown up, is most likely to burst. That is a sound and stable degree of honor to which God has destined his servants, whom you insult and deride. The height of your honor and vanishing glory, from the exaltation of which you look down upon me, will, if you desire I should speak the truth, only render your future fall more grievous and fatal, which he whose destruction you seek with such insatiable rage, sees indeed, but does not wish; nay, he rather wishes that this misery may be averted from you, and that by a return to the exercise of your right mind, it may be totally prevented: and therefore he gives you this admonition, lest, while you are deriding him, unexpected destruction should come upon you, and your laughter should prove of the *Sardonic* kind, which nothing can quiet till it end in death. You have indeed great strength and deep counsel, but these things are only the blandishments of your ruin, and the splendid prelude to that misery which is hovering over you. You have spent time enough, and, alas! how much more than enough, in giving chase to such vanities; at last regard the man who, in the most disinterested manner, admonishes you of the most important truths.

*How long will ye turn my glory into shame.*] The *Septuagint* appears to have read these words something different from our copies, but the sense is nevertheless much the same;* and though the psalmist, in the affair which he had in view, speaks only of a few, the words themselves have such an expressive dignity, and are in truth so unhappily extensive, that without doing any the least violence to them, they may be considered as an admonition to all mankind. *O ye sons of men, how long will ye love vanity and lies?* For, indeed, what are all those things which we foolish mortals pursue with such contention and ardor of spirit, but as an ancient expresses it, "trifles that are like but the shadow of smoke?"† But we are to speak of this hereafter. In the mean time, let us attend to the words before us, *How long will ye turn my glory into shame?* The things which are the brightest ornaments of human nature, and which alone constitute its very glory, are holiness, piety, and faith; and these are treated as if they were the most despicable and ignominious things in the whole world. Among Christians, or those who are called by that name, it is the greatest of all scandal to be a Christian indeed. We have long since lost the true names of things; candid simplicity of manners is despised as rusticity; lively religion is called the delirious dream of superstitious notions; and gentleness, dulness, and stupidity: while pride has usurped the name of magnanimity, and craft that of wisdom. Thus we turn true glory into shame, and shame into glory. And because few are able to discern what tends to their eternal happiness, they squander away the whole day of this short life in pursuing and catching at the false and fictitious forms of it; yea, they seek a lie, *lying vanity.* And they who heap up riches seem to be wise both to themselves and others; but oh, how far from it, and with how base a lie do they impose upon themselves! For these riches are spent upon gratifying their palate, and ministering in other respects to their luxury. Into how foul a gulf do they throw what they have labored so eagerly to gain! Or if they hoard up their wealth, how soon do they pass over

* Παρὰ τῶν θεῶν πρακτικώτερος ἂν εἴη. ὥσπερ καὶ παρ' ἀνθρώπων, ὥστε μὴ, ὁπότε ἐν ἀνδράσι εἴη, τότε κολακεύει ἀλλ' ὅτε πράττοι, τότε μάλιστα τῶν θεῶν μέμνηται.

† Accordingly, the Latin renders it, not *filii hominum*, but *filii virorum.*

* They render it ἕως ποτε βαρυκάρδιοι, "How long are ye slow of heart." And the Latins, *Usque quo grave corde.* Instead of *Kebudi lekelesseh*, they read *Kebudi leklessi.*

† Φλέδονες ἄκαυτα καὶ κενοῦ σκιαί.

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the property to their heirs! Men hunt after fame and vain glory, and, when they seem to have caught it, feed upon air, and become the slaves of all, even the meanest, for a thing of naught. And as for pleasure, who is so senseless as not to know how deceitful a lie it proves at last? It drives men into a weak phrensy, to run after the most trifling objects of pursuit, which fly from them like bees, who, if they are taken, yield but a drop of honey, and repay the spoil of it with a painful sting; a sting which, alas, reaches the very heart. Religion is a high sublime thing, royal, unconquerable, unwearied; but pleasure is low, servile, weak, and withering. Religion is neither attended by sickly disgust in the enjoyment, nor by bitter repentance in the reflection; but what the world calls pleasure is attended by both. Hear, my young friend, hear the Divine voice of celestial wisdom calling you with fervent affection and a loud cry, from the trackless ways of error and precipices of misery. *How long*, does she say, *how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing?* He that seeks me, shall not be wearied in running hither and thither, but shall find me sitting at his door and waiting admittance; and he who finds me needs seek nothing else, unless he be one whom a life of real happiness can not satisfy. Oh, that the indefatigable labor and industry with which men pursue flattering and uncertain enjoyments may stir up your minds to exert at least an equal diligence in this sublime and most blessed pursuit! For if, as St. Chrysostom speaks, it may seem indecent for me to press you further to such an attachment to these objects as they require, it will be a lovely thing to give it without further solicitation. But to proceed,

*How long will you love vanity, and seek after leasing.*] Can any one deny that this is the character of almost everything that is to be found in human life? Should a man proclaim this in every company with a loud voice, he would soon pass for a lunatic; but certainly, he might reproach them with the general madness which reigns among mankind, not only among the vulgar that he meets with in the streets, but the philosophers disputing in the school, the counsellors pleading in our courts of judicature, yea, the senators and nobles that sit in the most august assembly. And oh, how happy are they, of whatever order, whom the hand of God draws out of the crowd, and turns their minds from these various lying and transitory vanities, to the pursuit of true and lasting good! Happy they whom he, by a wonderful interposition of grace in their favor, *sets apart as dear to himself*. Which leads to the 3d verse.

Ver. 3. But know, that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the Lord will hear me when I call unto him.

The prophet hath this great support both of his faith and of his kingdom, the immutable and unshaken decree of the supreme and universal king, and it is the firm establishment of David's infinitely greater Son in his throne and kingdom, I *will declare the decree*. Psalm ii. 7. In this verse, and there, we may most properly understand it of both; more immediately of David as the type, but chiefly, and in its consummate sense, as referring to Christ the Lord, and having its full end and accomplishment in his endless and eternal kingdom. He is, by way of eminence, *God's holy one, holy, and harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners*. And those, whoever they are, who endeavor to oppose themselves to the Divine purposes, betray the most desperate madness, and on whatever strength or counsel they depend in the enterprise, like waves dashed against the solid rock, they shall be broken in pieces, by what they vainly attempt to break. And on this basis does the whole safety of the whole church rest, and that of all God's saints, of all those *whom he sets apart for himself*, and (as the form of the original here has been thought to imply) wonderfully separates, as his peculiar people and treasure, the sacred charge of Christ the great shepherd and bishop of souls, which all the powers of earth and the gates of hell shall in vain attempt to wrest from him. And this is the confidence on which believers should repose themselves. They never trust to themselves or their own strength or virtues, but they often redouble that cry, *Thou, Lord, art my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer*. Psalm xviii. 2. And Psalm xxxiv. 8, *Blessed, O Lord, is the man who trusteth in thee*, who must previously and necessarily despair first of himself, as considered in himself alone, as the great apostle says, *When I am weak, then am I strongest of all*, 2 Cor. xii. 10; according to that lively and just expression, "Faith which is endangered in security, in secure in danger."*

The psalmist adds, *The Lord will hear me when I call*. From the Divine decree and favor, he promises not to himself an entire freedom from all and every attempt of his enemies, but assures himself that God will be present in the midst of his calamities, present and propitious; not to the indolent and drowsy soul, but to that which solicits his assistance by prayer. And this is the determination of every godly man, whom the Lord *has set apart for himself*, that he will call upon God without ceasing, and that if any unusual difficulty arise, he will call upon him more fervently. Hence it appears, how entirely all our safety depends upon prayer. Yet, all our prayers, and those of the whole church, are sustained by those prayers of our great king and priest; as Augustine says in reference to that known story in the Evangelists, *Because the waves rise, the ship may be tossed, but because Christ prays, it can not be sunk*.†

* Fides quæ in securitate periclitatur in periculis secura est.

† Quia insurgunt fluctus, potest turbari navicula, sed quia Christus orat, non potest mergi.

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**Ver. 4. Stand in awe and sin not: commune with your own heart on your bed, and be still.** *Selah.*

Oh most friendly counsel which is here offered to enemies! This is indeed overcoming hatred and injury with the very best of favors; by far the most noble kind of victory. A sublime and heavenly mind, like the upper region of the world, is not only itself always calm and serene, as being inaccessible to every breath of injury and turbulent impression, but it also continually sheds down its benign influences without distinction on all below it, *on the evil and the good, the just and the unjust. Stand in awe:* the Hebrew and Greek have it, *be ye moved;* and as this emotion may arise either from anger, fear, or any other affection of the mind, *the Septuagint* renders it, *be angry and sin not,* a maxim which St. Paul finding to his purpose, inserts in his epistle to the Ephesians, ch. iv. 26. Nevertheless, the author of this psalm here seems apparently to demand their fear rather than their anger; and accordingly, the *Targum* explains it, *fear him.* i. e. *God, and sin not:* Kimchi—*fear the Lord who has chosen me king,* and Abenezra—*fear God and despise not my glory, for that great king will require the derision at the hand of the deriders.*

The passions are the inmost wheels of this machine which we call man, whose motions all the rest of the life follows, and all the errors of this career of ours proceed from their irregularity. Of so great importance is it that every one rightly determine what he should desire, and hope, and fear. And from the time that man lost the ingenuousness of his disposition, and became like a wild ass-colt, the use of fear is become very great. It is true that they who are born again, and who really are the sons of God, are especially led by the sweet and noble energy of this Divine principle, and therefore it is the saying of the beloved apostle, that *perfect love,* or charity, *casteth out fear.* 1 John iv. 18. But as the generality of mankind are either entirely destitute of this Divine love, or possess it only in a very low and imperfect degree, so it is certain, that with regard to him whose heart is most entirely fired with this celestial flame, we may understand the words as signifying, that in such a one this great and fervent love does indeed cast out all despairings and diffident fears, but not that of a pious and reverential awe. Alas! most of us, under the pretence of avoiding a servile terror, perversely shake off the bonds of holy and ingenuous fear, and become obstinate and self-willed; whereas, when we look into the word of God we shall find the holiest men there tremble in the Divine presence, and sometimes acknowledge even greater horror of mind. *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.* Psalm cxix. 120. *Destruction from God was a terror to me, and because of his excellency I could not endure.* Job xxxi. 23. In this sense, as David declares, *The fear of the Lord is clean, and endureth for ever.* Psalm xix. 9, endures in the most happy agreement with perfect love. Nor is it to remain only in spirits that inhabit flesh, but in all the angelic choirs, pure and happy as they are. Nay, the profound reverence of that eternal and tremendous majesty flourishes and reigns most of all there; for in proportion to the degree in which the knowledge is clearer, and vision more distinct, are the veneration and the fear more deep and humble. How reasonable then must it be, that mortal men, beset with sore temptations and dangers, should, as Hezekiah expresseth it, *walk softly and tremble* before that infinite Majesty, at *whose voice the earth is shaken,* and at whose *rebuke the pillars of heaven are moved.* With great propriety did one of the ancients say, "Fear is the first swaddling band of new-born wisdom,"* or, as the Scripture expresses it, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.* It is observed that the original word there made use of, signifies both the *beginning* and the *top;* and in both senses it is most true. The author just mentioned admirably says, "Do they call such a one unlearned? It is the only wisdom I know, to fear God; it is the beginning of wisdom and the end of all discourse, as Solomon describes it: it is indeed the τὸ πᾶν the whole matter, *the whole concern of man,* and it is *all in all—fear God.*"† And elsewhere he adds, "This fear is most salutary to men, but at the same time most rare, superlatively so."‡ And once more, "It is," says he, "the greatest of all good things, to fear God; and the ungodly, in falling from it, shall not be permitted long to continue in the abuse of his own folly."‖ Well, therefore, is it here added, *sin not.* This fear is the water of the sanctuary, to quench all the flames of concupiscence. This, says Bernard, *is the arrow that strikes through all the desires of the flesh.* Hence arose Abraham's fear and apprehension among strangers: *Surely,* says he, *the fear of God is not in this place.* Gen. xx. 11.

But in order to produce this fear, it is necessary that we should have right conceptions of God; that nothing impure can please him, because he is holiness itself; that nothing secret can be concealed from him, because he is light; nor can any sinner surely be mad enough to hope he shall escape the long hand of this righteous Judge and supreme King, whose power is immense, and who can not be a *respecter of persons.* What evil, then,

* Ὁ φόβος πρῶτον της σοφίας σπάργανον. Greg. Naz.

† Ἀπαίδευτον ὀνομάσουσι; μίαν σοφίαν οἶδα, τὸ φοβεῖσθαι Θεὸν· ἀρχὴ τε γαρ σοφίας, φόβος Κυρίου· καὶ τέλος λόγου, τὸ πᾶν ἄκουε, ἔφη Σολομων, τον Θεὸν φοβοῦ.—Greg. Naz. Or. 28.

‡ Φόβος δὲ Θεοῦ, ἀνθρώπου σωτήριος, σπάνιος δὲ, σπανιώτατος.

‖ Ἀγαθόν γε μην μέγιστον εὐλαβεῖσθαι Θεὸν οὗπερ ἀσεβὴς ἐκπεσὼν οὐ πολὺν χρόνον τῇ ἑαυτοῦ μορίᾳ καταχρήσεται.



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can escape with impunity? *Thou, O Lord, thou only art to be feared, and who can stand before thee when once thou art angry?* Psalm lxxvi. 7.

*Commune with your own heart.*] Or, as some render it, *examine yourselves.* Oh, how few do this! Men live abroad, and are indeed strangers at home: the great mark of human madness, to delight in speaking and hearing of what concerns others, "While no individual will attempt to descend into himself."* Yet this faculty, which we call reflection, is the peculiar privilege of human nature; and to be borne on wholly by external objects, is indeed brutal. And oh, what heaps of disorder, what odious filthiness must there necessarily be in a breast which is never looked into and cleansed out! Dear youths, if, amid all your other studies, you do not learn to converse and commune with your own selves, whatever you know, or rather, whatever you imagine you know, I would not purchase it at the expense of a straw.

*On your bed.*] Or, as some would render it, *in your secret chambers*, when free from the noise of the world, and hurries of their daily business. An ancient said, "The reflections of the night are deepest."† And it has been observed, that David, in the nineteenth Psalm, ascribes speech to the day, and wisdom to the silent night. It is an excellent advice of Pythagoras, and the verses that contain it do indeed deserve to be called *golden*, that "We should not allow ourselves to go to sleep, till we have seriously revolved the actions of the day, and asked ourselves, 'What have I done amiss? What good have I done, or neglected to do?' that so we may reprove ourselves for what has been wrong, and take the comfort of what has been as it ought."‡

*And be still.*] This refers not so much to the tongue, as to the mind: for what does an external silence signify, if the inward affections be turbulent? A sedate and composed mind is necessary in order to know ourselves and to know God, as it is hinted in Psalm xlvi. *Be still and know that I am God.* Such wisdom both deserves and demands a vacant soul: it will not, as it were, thrust itself into a corner, nor inhabit a polluted or unquiet breast. God was *not in the whirlwind, nor in the fire, but in the still small voice.* 1 Kings xix. 12. The Holy Spirit is peaceful and pacific, but wicked men are turbulent and stormy, driven *like the sea*, whose waves are tossed about, and *throw up continually mire and dirt.* Impurity is the inseparable attendant of this inquietude: *but the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable,* ἁγνή, ἔπειτα εἰρηνική, *pacifica.* James iii. 17; and in that blessed country to which it teaches us to aspire, there is the most perfect and everlasting conabitation of purity and peace.

VER. 5. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.

THE mind of man is earthly, I say, οἷος καὶ οἱ βροτοί εἰσι: *as mortals now are* entangled in the folds of flesh and sense, it knows not how to rise to things celestial and divine: and when it is stimulated with some sense of the eternal Deity, and the worship due to him, it generally slides into some lighter offices and external rites, how carelessly soever performed, and there it rests. *But God is a spirit*, and requires to be *worshipped in spirit and in truth.* And the solemn visible sacrifices, when instituted by the command of him the great Invisible, are to be presented by every pious person with all humble and obedient regard; yet, the chief labor is to be employed on the pure, sublime worship and obedience of the mind. The heathen philosophers objected to the primitive Christians, that they did not sacrifice; to which some of the early apologists reply thus: "The Former and Parent of the whole universe has no need of incense and of blood. The greatest sacrifice we can present to him, is to know who has *stretched out the heavens*, who has *laid the foundations of the earth*, who has *gathered the waters into the hollow of the sea*, and divided the light from the darkness, who has formed the whole animal world and the human species, and who governs them all by his nod; and acknowledging him such an immense and omnipotent being, to *lift up pure and holy hands to him.*"* And the truth of this sentiment has generally prevailed throughout all ages: even in the Jewish church, while the obligation to sacrifice did yet continue, with all the laborious institution of external worship, holiness, and righteousness, and integrity of heart and life, were acknowledged to be the most essential parts of religion, though, alas! while all confessed it in words, there were very few that set themselves seriously to perform it. Hence arose the necessity of inculcating this lesson so frequently, Psalm l., Isaiah i., xxix., &c.

* Athenagoras.

* Ut nemo in sese tentat descendere, nemo.

† Βαθυτέραι γαρ νυκτος φρένες.

‡ The original, with Mr. Rowe's translation and paraphrase, is as follows:—

Μὴ δ' ὕπνον μαλακοῖσιν ἐπ' ὄμμασι προσδέξασθαι,
Πρὶν τῶν ἡμερινῶν ἔργων τρὶς ἕκαστον ἐπελθεῖν.
Πῇ παρέβην; τί δ' ἔρεξα; τί μοι δέον οὐκ ἐτελέσθη;
Ἀρξάμενος δ' ἀπο πρώτου ἐπέξιθι καὶ μετέπειτα,
Δεινὰ μὲν ἐκπρήξας, ἐπικλήσασό χρηστά δε, τέρπου.

"Let not the stealing god of sleep surprise,
Nor creep in slumbers on thy weary eyes,
Ere every action of the former day
Strictly thou dost and righteously survey.
With reverence at thy own tribunal stand,
And answer justly to thy own demand,
Where have I been? In what have I transgressed?
What good or ill has this day's life expressed?
Where have I failed in what I ought to do?
In what to God, to man, or to myself I owe?
Inquire severe, whate'er from first to last,
From morning's dawn till evening's gloom has past.
If evil were thy deeds, repenting mourn,
And let thy soul with strong remorse be torn.
If good, the good with peace of mind repay,
And to thy secret self with pleasure say,
'Rejoice, my heart, for all went well to-day.'"

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And what is there taught at large, is here hinted in this short clause. Since the temple has been demolished, and the priests with their sacrifices have ceased, the Jews themselves have instituted, in the place of this, the offering of the lip, with the commemoration only of ancient sacrifice, persuaded that this would be equally effectual, and have appointed three daily lessons, calling him who diligently recites them, a son of eternal life.

*Offer the sacrifices of righteousness.*] It is no improbable conjecture of some commentators, that David here refers to the confidence and boast of some of Saul's courtiers in those sacrifices and that solemn worship from which their envy had perhaps banished him. It is certainly much easier to sacrifice a ram or a bullock, than to slay anger or ambition; easier, indeed, to heap up whole hecatombs of animals, than to resign one brutal affection or concupiscence; yea, easier to present all our goods, than ourselves as *living sacrifices*, though that is undoubtedly our *reasonable service*. The Mosaic sacrifices, though instituted by God, borrowed all their value from that Evening Victim which was to be slain in the end of the world, who was himself the sacrifice and the altar, and the one only *High Priest, after the order of Melchizedec;* who yet instituted a perpetual succession of those who should *be a royal priesthood*, the whole series of which priests, in their succeeding generations, are daily offering to God, *the Father of spirits*, the pure and spiritual sacrifice of righteousness, most acceptable to him, as passing through the hand of that great High Priest, who incessantly ministers in that high and holy sanctuary. As Bernard excellently speaks,* "Nothing, Lord, that is thine can suffice me without thyself, nor can anything that is mine without myself, be pleasing to thee." And St. Augustine,† "Let thy fire entirely consume me, so that nothing of me may remain to myself." And this one holocaust comprehends all the sacrifices of righteousness; the understanding, the love, all the affections and faculties of the soul, and organs of our bodies; all our words, actions, and thoughts, prayers and vows, hymns and thanksgivings, piety, modesty, charity, and the whole choir of virtues, exercised in a diligent and harmonious observance of all his precepts. These are victims and perfumes of incense worthy so pure a Deity, *who eats not the flesh of bulls, nor drinks the blood of goats; who, if he were hungry, would not ask us, since all the beasts of the forest are his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High. For he that offereth praise glorifies him, and to him that orders his conversation aright, will he show the salvation of God.*

* Nec mihi tua sufficiunt sine te, nec tibi placent mea sine me.

† Totum me consumat ignis tuus, nihil mei remaneat mihi.

Even the heathen philosophers and poets saw and taught, that these sacrifices of a pious mind were most fit for a rational worshipper, and must be most fit for God, to whom they are addressed. "Strange indeed would it be," says Socrates, "if the gods should look to the gift and sacrifice, and not the soul." And passages of Horace* and Persius† to this purpose are so well known, that they need not be repeated. The language of the son of Sirach is also agreeable to it, Eccles. XXXV. 1–3: *He that keepeth the law, bringeth offerings enough; he that taketh heed to the commandment, offereth a peace-offering. He that requiteth a good turn, offereth fine flour; and he that gives alms, sacrificeth praise. To depart from wickedness is a thing pleasing to the Lord, and to forsake unrighteousness is a propitiation.*

*And put your trust in the Lord.*] This very trust with which the mind reposes itself upon God, is both the great consolation of a good man, and the great sacrifice of piety and righteousness. The faith of Abraham was a sacrifice much dearer to God, not only than the ram which he actually offered, but even than his dearest son whom he had brought to the altar. *He was strong in faith*, says the apostle, *and so he gave glory to God.* And again, only they who offer the sacrifice of righteousness can rely upon him with a true and solid confidence. Not that these sacrifices, though the choicest and best of all, can pretend to any merit, but because they are the most genuine signs and most certain seals of a soul in covenant with God. So that there is indeed a mutual signing; God offering the dearest pledges of his favor to us, and we, in like manner, as is most fit, rendering all that we have, and all that we are, to him, with the most humble and grateful heart. And certainly this union and perpetual, undivided friendship, is the true εὐθυμία of the holy soul; that temperature which alone can give it solid tranquillity and felicity, as it follows presently after in this Psalm.

VER. 6. There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

THE psalmist now returns to himself and his own affairs, and having sufficiently admonished his enemies concerning the true and only good, enforces his exhortation by his example, that if they thought fit, they might follow it (for this is the most efficacious manner of teaching); but if they would not, that he might at least enjoy the benefit of his own counsel, and wrapping himself up in his own happiness, might, from that eminence, look down upon all the vain and wretched pursuits of the mad vulgar. Like drunken men, they

* Immunis aram si tetigit manus:
Non sumptuosâ blandior hostiâ,
Mollibit aversos Penateis
Farre pio, et saliente micâ.

† Compositum jus fasque animi, sanctosque recessus
Mentis, et incoctum generoso pectus honesto.
Hæc cedo ut admoveam templis, et farre litabo.

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reel and stagger from place to place; they often fall down upon their face, and strike and dash themselves against what they desired to embrace. Through all their life, with an unstable pace, they catch at flying forms of good; and after all their falls and their bruises, they cry out again and again, *Who will show us any good?* And when they behold any new species or shadow of it, they immediately run to it. Nay, perhaps so light and various are they in their pursuit, they return again to that in which they had been frequently deceived, and which they had as often abandoned. Rabbi Solomon paraphrases the words thus: "When Israel saw the nations prosperous, he said, 'Who will show us a like prosperity?' But David says, 'Envy them not; we have a sublimer prosperity in the light of thy Divine countenance.'"—"That is good," says the great philosopher of the schools, "which all pursue." The various affections and desires of the mind are as the pulse and natural respiration; but certain internal principles, which, not inwrought by nature, are afterward received and deeply engraved upon the heart, are the springs of that motion: our different opinions of different things do nevertheless all meet in this—*that we would see good.* But they who select, from the various objects that present themselves, a suitable, complete, and substantial good, and who, neglecting everything else, bend all their pursuits to that, are the only wise and happy men.

This, the psalmist professes he did, and freely invites all that pleased, to join and take a part with him in these desires and pursuits, well-knowing that the happiness was abundantly sufficient for many, for all that would apply themselves to it, and such as could not at all be diminished by being imparted for it was indeed the *αὐτάρκες καλὸν*, the self-sufficient and all-sufficient good, which was one of the titles that some of the wiser heathens gave their *Jupiter.* But he of whom we speak is *the living and the true God;* nor is there any other good whatsoever adequate to the human mind. And what we say of his infinite sufficiency, is most aptly signified by this adumbration which the psalmist uses,—I say, *by the adumbration of light*, nor do I think fit to correct it as an incongruous expression, for *light* is indeed as it were the *shadow of God*, and that fulness of supreme good which is in him, is in some degree shadowed out by light, which entirely illustrates, with the full stream of its rays, all who behold it, and is not broken into little fragments, to be sparingly distributed to each. Many seek *many things;* they pursue any good, with uncertain and ignorant desires; but we have fixed upon the one petition we should insist upon, for in this one is all, *Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us.* Oh rich, grand, and incomparable desire! Without this, all the proudest palaces of monarchs are gloomy caverns, dark as hell, and all the riches of all the earth mere indigence. This is the proper light of the intellectual world, and it *puts gladness into the heart*, as it follows.

VER. 7. Thou hast put gladness into my heart more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.

*Gladness into my heart.*] To which the gross delights of earthly things can not reach: they stick as it were before the threshold. *Corn and wine* are only the refreshment of these mean, frail, earthly bodies, and the support of this corporeal and terrene life, but have nothing *συγγενές*, congenial with, and a-kin to the heaven-born spirit. It is said indeed that *bread strengtheneth man's heart*, and *wine makes it glad;* but the heart there spoken of, is that which is the spring of animal life and natural spirit: whereas, to that heart which holds the preference in human nature, which may therefore be called the *ἡγεμονικὴ*, *the governing part*, there is nothing which gives light and gladness, beneath the eternal *father of lights and of spirits.* He cherishes the languishing soul with the rays of his love, and satisfies it with the consolations of his Spirit, as with a kind of heavenly *nectar* or *nepenthe*, that, while it confides in his safety, lays all its cares and fears asleep, and lulls it into deep peace, and calm, sweet repose; without which, if the mind be a little agitated, no gentle breeze of harmony, no melody of birds or harp, can bring on the pleasing slumber, during which, nevertheless, the heart awakes. Oh, happy man, who betakes his whole soul to God, and does not only choose him above all, but in the place of all, waiting only on him! Happy man, who, having been chosen by him with preventing love, and unmerited benignity, embraces his ample, all-sufficient creator for his inheritance and his wealth, often repeating with sacred transport, *Deus meus et omnia!* My God and my all! This is the man that has enough; and therefore, to allude to the words of the poet, "he is not disquieted by the raging of the sea, nor any severity of the seasons, whatever stars may rise and set."*

God fixes his gracious dwelling in the pure and holy soul which has learned to despise the vanity of riches, and makes it calm in the midst of hurries, and secure in the deepest solicitudes. And not merely to find, but even to seek after God, is better to such a soul, inexpressibly better, than to possess the richest treasure, the most extensive empire, or to have all the variety of sensual pleasures waiting upon its back.

I remember to have read of some military officers, who crossing the Nile, in the same boat with the two *Macarii* of Egypt, said to them, in allusion to their name, "You are indeed happy, who laugh at the world." "Yes,"

* ——— Neque
Tumultuosum sollicitat mare,
Nec sævus Arcturi cadentis
Impetus, aut orientis hœdi.—Hor., lib. 2. Od.

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said they, "it is evident that we are happy, not merely in name, but in reality, but you are unhappy whom the world derides, as poor creatures whom it sees entangled in its snares."

St. Augustine also quotes from Politian, a similar example of a Pretorian soldier, who walking out with his comrade, found in a cottage into which he accidentally came, a book containing the life of the hermit Anthony, and when he had read a little of it, looking upon his friend, said, "At what are we taking so much pains to arrive? What do we seek? For what do we go through the fatigues of a military life? The highest of our hopes at court must be, to share some extraordinary degree of the emperor's favor. And how frail and dangerous a situation is that! And through how many other previous dangers must we pass to it! And how soon will all the advantages we can hope from it be over! But I may this moment, if I please, become the friend and favorite of God." And he had no sooner uttered these words, than they both resolved upon quitting the world, that they might give up all the remainder of their days to religion.

Holy men in former ages did wonders in conquering the world and themselves; but we, unhappy, degenerate, and drowsy creatures as we are, blush to hear that they did what we can not or will not do. We are, indeed, inclined to disbelieve the facts, and rather choose to deny their virtues, than to confess our own indolence and cowardice.

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## MEDITATIONS ON PSALM XXXII.

VER. 1. Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

OH, the pure, the overflowing, the incomparably sweet fountain of scripture!

"Hence light we draw, and fill the sacred cup"*—

whereas the springs of philosophy in human affairs are not very clear, and in Divine, they are quite turbid and muddy; which one of the greatest orators and philosophers among them all, freely confesses. "I think," says he, "we are not only blind to true wisdom, but are very dull and slow of apprehension even in those things which seem to be discerned and understood."† Nor is this to be wondered at; for there would be little difference between things human and Divine, if the dim eye of our reason were sufficient to discover their secrets. One of the ancients excellently says, "If you examine things ever so accurately, you will never be able to discover them if God keeps them veiled."‡

It would be a vain and ridiculous labor, to light up a great number of lanterns and torches, and go out and look for the sun in the night; but when the appointed hour of the morning comes, he arises, as if of his own accord and freely manifests himself, by his own lustre, to every beholder. The wisest of the heathens undertook to find out the Supreme Being and the supreme good; but wandering through the devious ways of multiplied errors, they could attain to neither. Nor was it the least of their errors, that they sought them as two different things, when it is most certain that both are united in one; for it is the only and ultimate happiness of man, to be united to that first and Supreme being and good, from which he drew his original. But since there has so sad a distance and disagreement arisen between God and mar by our deplorable apostacy from him, there could not be the least hope of attaining that union, did not infinite goodness and mercy propose the full and free pardon of our offences: so that the true determination of this grand question about happiness, is evidently that, *blessed and happy is that man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.* Innocence was the first means of obtaining happiness, which, being once violated, the only plank that can save us after our shipwreck, is remission and repentance; which two things, the whole Scripture assures us, that the Divine wisdom has so connected, as with an adamantine band. And this psalm now before us is a signal declaration of it, which, since it inculcates so grand a topic of religion, κορίαν δόξαν, may well be styled as it is, *Maschil, a lesson of instruction.* For, as St. Augustine well observes, "That is instruction indeed, which teaches us that man is not saved by the merits of his works, but by the grace of God."*

*Blessed.*] Or, O blessed man, or, Oh, the felicities of that man!—to denote the most supreme and perfect blessedness.† He only has attained to complete felicity, whose numerous debts are all remitted, though, far from being able to pay them, he could not so much as reckon them up. And blessed is he that knows it, as the proverb is, "No man is happy but he who thinks himself so."‡

*The man whose iniquity is forgiven.*] As the word is *nesevi*, it might be rendered, *Blessed is the man who is eased of the heavy burden of his sin.* A burden, indeed, too heavy for the strongest man upon earth; a burden so dreadfully great, that God's angels are not able to stand under it; for many of the chief of them were pressed down to hell by it, and can rise no more. But though no giant on earth or in heaven could bear it, a LAMB subjected himself to it. But it was *a*

* Hinc lucem haurire est, et pocula sacra.

† Mihi non modò ad sapientiam cæci videmur, sed ad ea ipsa, quæ aliqua ex parte cerni videantur, hebetes et obtusi.—SENECA.

‡ Ἀλλ' οὐ γὰρ ἂν τὰ θεῖα κρύπτοντες θεοὶ
Μαθοῖς ἂν οὐδ' εἰ πανθ' ὑπεξέλθοις σκοπῶν.—SOPHOCLES.

* Quâ intelligitur non meritis operum, sed Dei gratiâ hominem liberari.

† As the Elephant, to denote its vast bulk, is spoken of in the plural number, *Behemoth.*

‡ Non est beatus qui se non putat.

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*Lamb without blemish and without spot*, burdened with no load of his own sin, nor stained with the least spot of pollution. *The Lamb of God, the Son of God*, who is himself God, is he, ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου, who takes away all the sins of the world, as one sin: taking the burden upon himself, he bears it and carries it away.

*Covered.*] That sinners may more clearly apprehend, and more easily and firmly believe a thing which seems so difficult to admit, as the free and full remission of sin, it is painted out by various beautiful expressions and figures in the sacred Scriptures; *washing, cleansing, blotting out, scattering like a cloud, entirely forgetting, casting into the bottom of the sea*, and here, by that of *taking away and covering*, and by that phrase which explains both, of *not imputing* them. And this expression of *covering* them, is with great propriety added to the former phrase of lightening the sinner of the burden of them, that there may be no fear of their returning again, or coming into sight, since God has not only taken the heavy load from our shoulders, but for ever hidden it from his own eyes, and the veil of mercy has taken it away; that great covering of Divine love, which is large enough to overspread so many and so great offences. Thus it does, as it were, turn away the penetrating eye of his justice, which the most secret inquiry could not elude, did not he himself in pity voluntarily avert it.

But you well know what is our *propitiatory*, what the covering of the mercy-seat, even Jesus, who was typified by that *Caporeth* in the Temple, which the *Septuagint* render ἱλαστήριον ἐπίθεμα, a *propitiatory covering:* by which title our great Redeemer is marked out, Rom. iii. 25, as the same Hebrew word, *Caphar*, signifies both *to cover* and *to expiate*.* But that the thing may be more evident and certain, the thought is repeated again in the second verse.

VER. 2. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

ABEN-EZRA paraphrases it, *Of whose sins God does not think*, does not regard them, so as to bring them into judgment, reckoning them as if they were not; οὐ μὴ λογίσεται, *does not count or calculate them, or charge them to account;* does not require for them the debt of punishment. To us the remission is entirely free, our Sponser having taken upon him the whole business of paying the ransom. His suffering is our impunity, his bond our freedom, and his chastisement our peace; and therefore the prophet says, *The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.* Distracted creatures that we are, to indulge in those sins which brought death upon our dear Redeemer, and to be so cold in our affections to that Redeemer who died for those sins!

This weighty sentence, of itself so admirable, Paul renders yet more illustrious, by inserting it into his reasonings on the topic of justification, Rom. iv. 6, as a celebrated testimony of that great article of our faith. "David," says he, "thus describeth the blessedness of that man, saying, *Blessed is he whose iniquities are forgiven.*" So that this is David's opinion concerning true happiness: he says not, Blessed are those who rule over kingdoms, blessed are those generals who are renowned for their martial bravery and success, though he himself had both these titles to boast of. It is not the encomiums of the greatest multitudes, nor the breath of popular applause, nor any other degree of human honor, which entitles a man to this character. It is not said, Blessed is he who ploughs many thousand acres of land, or who has heaped together mountains of gold and silver; nor, Blessed is he who has married a beautiful and rich woman, or (which in his age, or even now in those eastern countries, might be the case), he who was possessed of many such; nor, Blessed is he who understands the secrets of nature, or even the mysteries of religion; but, *Oh, happy man whose sins are pardoned, and to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile*, whose breast is full, not of feigned repentance, but of a fervent love of holiness, and hatred of sin. This makes life happy, nay, absolutely blessed. But alas! when we inculcate these things, we sing to the deaf. The ignorance and folly of mankind will not cease to pronounce the proud and the covetous happy, and those who triumph in successful wickedness, and who, in chase of these lying shadows of happiness, destroy their days, and their years, and their souls.

"Alas," says the wise Roman, "how little do some who thirst most impatiently after glory, know what it is, or where it is to be sought!"* which is equally applicable to that true calm and serenity of mind which indeed all pursue, but yet few are able to attain. But as for us who enjoy the celestial instruction of this sacred volume, if we are ignorant of it, our ignorance is quite inexcusable, obstinate, and affected, since we are wilfully blind in the clearest and most refulgent light. This points out that good which can completely fill all the most extended capacities of the human soul, and which we generally seek for in vain on all sides, catching at it where it is not to be found, but ever neglecting it where alone it is. But is it then possible at once to be solidly and completely happy? You have not merely the ideas of it,

* It is observed, the Hebrew word *Eschol haccopher*, which some render *a cluster of camphire*, Cant. i. 14, may, with a little variation in the reading (i. e. reading it *Ish col haccapher*), be rendered *a man of all kinds of redemption*, or *of all expiation*. So the *Targum* interprets it, by expiation. And by the way, some assert that this psalm used to be sung on the day of expiation.

* Quàm ignorant homines gloriæ cupidi, quæ ea sit, aut quemadmodum petenda.—SENECA.

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but the thing itself, not only clearly pointed out, but most freely offered, with divine munificence; so that if you do not obstinately reject the offer, it must be your own. And this happiness consists in returning to the favor and friendship of God, who most mercifully grants us the free pardon of all our sins, if we do, with unfeigned repentance and a heart free of all guile, not only humbly confess and lament them, but entirely forsake, and with implacable hatred for ever renounce them, ὦ μάκαρ εὐδαίμων τε καὶ ὄλβιος. All the names, all the variety of felicities, bliss, and happiness, are accumulated on that man who has known this *change of the right hand of the Most* High,* on whom this bright day of expiation and pardon has beamed. He easily looks down from on high on all the empty titles and false images of earthly happiness, and when he is bereaved of them all, yea, and beset on every side with what the world calls misfortunes and afflictions, ceases not to be happy. In sorrow he is joyful, in poverty rich, and in chains free: when he seems buried deep, so that not one ray of the sun can reach him, he is surrounded with radiant lustre: when overwhelmed with ignominy, he glories; and in death itself, he lives, he conquers, he triumphs. What can be heavy to that man who is eased of the intolerable burden of sin? How animated was that saying of Luther, "Smite, Lord, smite, for thou hast absolved me from my sins."† Whose anger should he fear who knows that God is propitious to him, that Supreme *King, whose wrath is indeed the messenger of death, but the light of his countenance is life;* who gladdens by the rays of his favor, and by one smile disperses the darkest cloud, and calms the most turbulent tempest?

But we must now observe the complication of a two-fold, in constituting this felicity: for we have two things here connected, as conspiring to make the person spoken of blessed; the free remission of sin, and the inward purification of the heart. *In whose spirit there is no guile.* This simplicity, ἀφελότης, is a most excellent part of purity, opposed to all wickedness and arts of deceit; and in common speech, that which is simple and has no foreign mixture, is called *pure.* Pardon presents us as just and innocent before our Judge; and that sanctity is not to be regarded as constituting any part of our justifying righteousness before God, nor as only the condition or sign of our felicity, but is truly and properly a part of it. Purity is the accomplishment of our felicity, begun on earth, and to be consummated in heaven; that purity, I say, which is begun here, and shall there be consummated. But if any one think he can divide these two things, which the hand of God has joined by so inseparable a bond, it is a vain dream. Nay, by attempting to separate these two parts of happiness, he will in fact only exclude himself from the whole. Jesus, our victorious Savior, has snatched us from the jaws of eternal death; but, to be delivered from the cruel tyranny and bonds of sin and to be brought into the blessed liberty of the sons of God, was another essential part of our redemption, and if any one does not embrace this with equal alacrity and delight as the other benefit, he is a wretched slave of the most mean and ignoble spirit, and being equally unworthy of both parts of this stupendous deliverance, he will justly forfeit and lose both. And this is the epidemical Antinominianism of the Christian world, because they who labor under it have nothing but the name of Christians: they gladly hear of the pardon of their sins, and the salvation of their souls, while they are averse to the doctrine of holiness and repentance. It is a disagreeable message, *a hard saying, and who can bear it!* But oh, the incomparable charms of holiness! It is to be desired, not only for the sake of other benefits which come in its train, but especially for itself: so that he who is not transported with a most ardent love of it, is blind, and deserves to be thrust into the mill, to tread that uncomfortable round, and to grind there; deserves to be a slave for ever, since he knows not how to use liberty when offered to him. Shall the Stoic say, "The servant of philosophy is truly free,"* and shall we scruple to assert the same concerning pure religion, and evangelical holiness? Now this freedom from guile, this fair simplicity, of which the psalmist speaks, is deservedly reckoned among the chief endowments of a pure soul, and is here named instead of all the rest, as nothing is more like to that God who inspects the very heart, in nothing do we so much resemble him; and therefore, it is most agreeable to him, because most like unto him. He is the most simple of all beings, and is indeed truth itself, and therefore, He *desires truth in the inward parts,* and hates *a heart and a heart,* as the Hebrew phrase is to express those that are double-hearted. And how much our blessed Redeemer esteems this simplicity, we may learn from the earnestness with which he inculcates it upon his disciples, that they should be *simple as doves.* Matt. x. 16. We may learn it also from the honorable testimony he bears to this character in Nathanael, when he pronounces him, John i. 47, *an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.* And especially from his own perfect example, as it is said of him, 1 Peter ii. 22, *He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* Perhaps the psalmist might the more willingly mention this virtue, as he reflected with penitential distress on this crafty and cruel attempt of covering that adultery which he had committed, with the veil of murder. But

* Alluding to Psalm lxxvii. 10, where the Vulgate renders *Seuih*, change, *mutatio dexteræ Excelsi;* and several other Versions nearly agree with it.

† Feri, Domine, feri; nam à peccatis absolvisti me.

* Qui philosophiæ inservit, est verè liber.

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however that was, it is certain that this guileless sincerity of heart holds the first rank in the graces that attend true repentance. It may be sometimes our duty to open our sins to men, by an ingenuous confession; but it is always our duty to do it to God, who promises to cover them only on this condition, that we do sincerely uncover them ourselves. But if we affect that which is his part, he will, to our unspeakable damage, do that which he had assigned to us. If we hide them, he will bring them into open light, and will discuss and examine each with the greater severity: "He," says Ambrose, "who burdens himself, makes his error so much the lighter."* "In proportion to the degree," says Tertullian,† "in which you are unwilling to spare yourself, God will spare you." But what madness is it to attempt to conceal any action from him, from whom, as Thales wisely declares, "you can not so much as conceal a thought?"‡ But not now to insist upon the impossibility of a concealment, a wise man would not wish to cover his wounds and his disease from that physician, from whose skilful hand he might otherwise receive healing; and this is what the psalmist presently after, for our instruction, confesses.

Ver. 3. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long.

While he suppressed the ingenuous voice of confession, the continually increasing weight of his calamity extorted from him a voice of roaring; "While I would not speak as it became a guilty man, I was compelled even to bellow like a beast."‖ Nevertheless, this wild roaring did not move the divine compassion, nor atone his displeasure.

Ver. 4. For day and night thine hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.

Hitherto that voice was wanting, to which the bowels of the Father always echo back, the voice of a son full of reverence, and ready to confess his errors; without which, cries and lamentations in misery are no more regarded in the sight of God, than the howling of dogs, according to that expression of Hosea, vii. 14, *They have not cried to me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds.* A dog howls when he is hungry, or when he is lashed; but from a son, when he is chastened, acknowledgments of his fault, and deprecations of his father's displeasure, are expected; and when the son thus acknowledges his offence, and entreats for pardon, it is the part of a compassionate father to forgive, and to spare. Nor do we indeed confess our offences to our Father, as if he were not perfectly acquainted with them, but we fly to him who requires we should repent, that he may not show us by punishment, those things which we shun showing to him by confession. "I confessed unto the Lord," says Augustine, "to whom all the abyss of my sin and misery lay open: so that if I did not confess whatever was hidden in my heart, I should not hide myself from him, but him from me."*

*Thy hand was heavy upon me.*] That hand, which, when pressing, is so heavy, when raising, is so sweet and powerful, Psalm xxxvii. 24, and when scattering its blessings, so full and so ample. Psalm civ. 28; cxlv. 16. He would not at first be humbled by the confession of his iniquity, and therefore he is humbled by the weight of the hand of God. Oh, powerful hand! beyond all comparison more grievous than any other hand to press down, and more powerful to raise up! He who suppresses his sins without confessing them,

*Vulnus alit venis, et cæco carpitur igne:*
"Conceals an inward wound, and burns with secret fire."

Under the appearance of sparing, he is indeed cruel to himself; when he has drunk down iniquity, and keeps it within, and it is not covered by the Divine forgiveness, it is like a poison which consumes the marrow in the midst of his bones, and dries up the vital moisture. It may perhaps occasion more present pain, to draw out the point of the weapon which sticks in the flesh; but to neglect it, will occasion greater danger and more future torment. Nor will the dart fall out by his running hither and thither, but on the contrary, as the poet expresses it with respect to the wounded deer, it fixes deeper and deeper.*

But the only healing herb that the sinner can find, is true repentance and humble confession; not that which acknowledges sin in a few slight words, when it has hardly looked upon it and known it, but that which proceeds from a previous true and vivid compunction of soul, and is inseparably attended by renovation and purity of heart and life: and so, as comprehending this, it is sometimes put for the whole of repentance. 1 John i. 9. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* And so in the Psalm before us.

Ver. 5. I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. *Selah.*

True and genuine repentance hath eyes, as it were, on both sides, προσω και ὀπισω βλεπει: it looks back on sins already committed, to

* Allevat errores ille qui se onerat.

† Quantum tibi non peperceris, tantum tibi parcet Deus.

‡ Ὃν σὺ λανθάνεις οὐδὲ διανοήματος.

‖ Dum nolui loqui ut hominem reum decet, mugire coactus sum ut brutum.

* Et tibi, Domine, cujus oculis nuda abyssus, quid occultum esset in me si non confiterer, non me tibi absconderem, sed te mihi.

† ——Illa fugâ sylvas saltusque peragrat
Dyctæos, hæret lateri letalis arundo.

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ament them: it looks forward, and humbly resolves no more to commit what it has lamented. And each of these is expressed by each of the words by which repentance is signified, μεταμέλεια and μετανοία; which words are therefore used promiscuously, both by the sacred writers and by others, so that the received difference between them seems to me to have little foundation. For Phavorinus interprets the word μετανοία, an anguish of soul under the consciousness of having acted a foolish and absurd part; and the Latin has the same signification, if we will admit the judgment of Gellius, who seems to have been a very accurate critic in affairs of that nature. He observes, "We are said to repent of things, whether our own actions, or those of others which have been performed by our advice or instigation, which do afterward displease us, so that we change our judgment concerning them."* But we will wave all further concern about words; the thing itself demands our greatest attention. I entirely agree with him who said, "I had rather feel the inward working of repentance, than know the most accurate description and definition of it."† Yet how averse sinners are to this free though useful and salutary confession of sin, abundantly appears from this example of so great a man as the psalmist, when taken in this unhappy snare; for he confesses that he lay long as senseless and stupid in that quagmire into which he was fallen, and that it was with difficulty that he was as it were racked into a confession, by such exquisite tortures both of body and mind. On the other hand, the gracious readiness of the Father of mercies to grant pardon, is so much the more evident, as on the first word of confession that he uttered, or rather the first purpose that he formed in his mind, immediately the pardon, the full and free pardon, came down signed, as in the court of heaven. *I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest.* O admirable clemency! It requires nothing but that the offender should plead guilty, and this not that it may more freely punish, but more liberally forgive. He requires that we should condemn ourselves, that so he may absolve us.

VER. 6. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be found: surely, in the floods of great waters, they shall not come nigh unto him.

THIS is the joyful message, this is the great doctrine of the gospel, which opens the first door of hope to sinners; that God is capable of being appeased, yea, that he is actually appeased: that he freely offers peace and favor to those who have deserted him when they return to his obedience; that he runs forth to meet them and to receive them with a most affectionate embrace; and having so importunely entreated our return, will not despise those who are treading back with prayers and tears the fatal path which their folly had chosen. This is what we so frequently read in Scripture, that *the Lord is gracious and very merciful, slow to anger, and ready to pardon.* If he were not such, who could dare approach him? But seeing he is such a God, who should refuse or delay his return? Surely, every rational and pious mind will, without delay, invoke so gentle and mild a Lord; *will pray to him while he is exorable*, or, as the Hebrew expresses it, *in a time of finding.* For he who promises pardon, does not promise to-morrow. There are the *tempora fandi*, certain times in which he may be spoken with, and a certain appointed day of pardon and of grace, which if a man by stupid perverseness despise, or by sloth neglect, surely he is justly overwhelmed with eternal night and misery, and must necessarily perish by the deluge of Divine wrath; since he has contemned and derided that Ark of salvation which was prepared, and in which whoever enters into it shall be safe, while the world is perishing. Though all be one unbounded sea, a sea without shore, yet, as it is here said, the greatest inundation, *the floods of deep waters shall not come nigh unto him.* This, the psalmist exhorts those that have experienced it, to teach, and determines himself so to retain it with deep attention and firm faith in his own mind, as in the following verse.

Ver. 7. *Thou art my hiding place.*] Thou hast been, and wilt ever be so. *Thou hast surrounded*, and thou wilt surround *me, with songs of deliverance;* even me who was so surrounded with clamors of sin. Where he further intimates, that songs of praise are perpetually to be offered to God our deliverer. And that these faithful admonitions and counsels may meet with greater attention and regard, he offers himself to us as a most benevolent teacher and leader.

Ver. 8, 9, 10, 11. *I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way in which thou shalt go,* &c.] See to it only, that thou be tractable, and dost not with brutal obstinacy and fierceness repel this friendly and wise counsel, as capable of being governed only by violence, like a mule or unbroken horse, which must be held in by bit and bridle. Such indeed are the greatest part of men, whom the philosophers with great severity, but with too much justice, called βουγενῆ ἀνδράποδα, "Wild bulls with human faces."

But it is added, as the sum of all admonition, and the great axiom most worthy of regard, that *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked* [the *Septuagint* render it *many are the scourges of the sinner**], but *mercy shall embrace those that hope in the Lord.* And the Psalm concludes with this as the burden of

* Pœnitere tum dicere solemus, cùm quæ ipsi fecimus, aut quæ de nostra voluntate nostroque consilio facta sunt, ea nobis post incipiunt displicere, sententiamque in iis nostram demutamus.

† Malo sentire compunctionem, quàm scire ejus definitionem. *Thom. à Kempis*, l. i., c.1.

* Πολλαὶ μαστιγες ἁμαρτωλοῦ.



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it, *Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.*

Truly, my dear friends,* I have nothing further to wish for myself or you, than that we may heartily believe these things; for then it would be impossible that we should not with open arms embrace true religion, and clasp it to our hearts, since nature teaches every one to desire happiness, and to flee from misery. So that Epicurus himself would teach us to lay hold on joy and pleasure, as the τὸ πρῶτον οἰκεῖον, or first and proper good. This, therefore, let us lay down as a certain principle, and ever adhere to it, that we may not, like brute beasts, remain in subjection to the flesh; that safety, and joy and all happiness are the property of him who is possessed of virtue, and that all virtue is comprehended in true piety. And let us remember what the prophet adds (according to the Greek translators†), as the necessary consequence of this principle, that *to the wicked there can be no joy.*

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## MEDITATIONS ON PSALM CXXX.

Ver. 1. Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord.

It is undoubtedly both a useful and a pleasant employment, to observe the emotions of great and heroic minds in great and arduous affairs: but that mind only is truly great, and superior to the whole world, which does in the most placid manner subject itself to God, securely casting all its burdens and cares upon him, in all the uncertain alterations of human affairs, looking at his hand, and fixing its regards upon that alone. Such the royal prophet David declares himself everywhere to have been, and nowhere more evidently than in this Psalm, which seems to have been composed by him. He lifts up his head amid surrounding waves, and directing his face and his voice to Heaven, he says, *Out of the depths, O Lord, do I cry unto thee.* For so I would render it, as he does not seem to express a past fact, but as the Hebrew idiom imports, a prayer which he was now actually presenting.

*Out of the depths.*] Being as it were immersed and overwhelmed in an abyss of misery and calamities. It is indeed the native lot of man, to *be born to trouble, as* it is for *the sparks* (the children of the coal, as the original expression signifies) *to fly upward.* Life and grief are congenial;‡ but men who are born again, seem, as in a redoubled proportion, to be *twice born to trouble;* with so many and so great evils are they as it were laden, beyond all other men, and that to such a degree, that they may seem sometimes to be oppressed with them. And if any think this is strange, surely as the apostle expresses it, *he can not see afar off,* μωσπάζει; at best, he only looks at the surfaces of things, and can not penetrate far into those depths. For even the philosophers themselves, untaught by Divine revelation, investigated admirable reasons for such dispensations of Providence, and undertook in this respect boldly to plead the cause of God. "God," says the Roman sage, "loves his own people truly, but he loves them severely! As the manner in which fathers express their love to their children is generally very different from that of mothers; they order them to be called up early to their studies and suffer them not to be idle in those days, when their usual business is interrupted, but sometimes put them on laboring till the sweat flows down, and sometimes by their discipline excite their tears: while the mother fondles them in her bosom, keeps them in the shade, and knows not how to consent, that they should weep, or grieve, or labor. God bears the heart of a father to good men, and there is strength rather than tenderness in his love; they are therefore exercised with labors, sorrows, and losses, that they may grow robust; whereas, were they to be fattened by luxurious fare and indulged in indolence, they would not only sink under fatigues, but be burdened with their own unwieldy bulk."* Presently after, he quotes a remarkable saying of Demetrius the Cynic,† to this purpose, "He seems to be the unhappiest of mankind, who has never been exercised with adversity, as he can not have had an opportunity of trying the strength of his mind." To wish to pass life without it, is to be ignorant of one part of nature, so that I may pronounce thee to be miserable, if thou hast never been miserable. If thou hast passed through life without ever struggling with an enemy, no one, not even thou thyself, can know whether thou art able to make any resistance: whereas in afflictions, we experience not so much what our own strength is, as what is the strength of God in us, and what the aid of divine grace is, which often bears us up under them to a surprising degree, and makes us joyful by a happy exit; so that we shall be able to say, *My God, my strength, and my deliverer.* Thus the church becomes

* The word *Juvenes*, or *my dear youths*, occurs here and in several other places, as these lectures were delivered to a society of young theological students; but it did not seem necessary to make the translation so exactly literal.

† Οὐκ ἐστὶ χαίρειν τοῖς ἀσέβεσι.

‡ Ὡς ἄρα συγγενὴς ἐστὶ λύπη καὶ βιός.

* Verè suos amat et severè Deus. Multo aliter patres, aliter matres indulgent: illi liberos ad studia obeunda maturè excitari jubent, feriatis quoque diebus non patiuntur otiosos, et sæpe sudorem illis, et interdum lachrymas excutiunt: at matres fovere in sinu, in umbra, continere volunt; nunquam flere, nunquam tristari, nunquam laborare. Patrium habet Deus adversus bonos viros animum, et illos fortiùs, amat; et operibus, doloribus, ac damnis exagitantur, ut verum colligant robur. Languent per inertiam saginata: nec labore tantùm, sed et mole, et ipso sui onere deficiunt.—Seneca.

† Nihil mihi videtur infelicius eo, cui nihil unquam evenerit adversi; non licuit illi se experiri.

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conspicuous in the midst of the flames, like the burning bush, *through the good-will of Him that dwelt in it.* And when it seems to be overwhelmed with waters, God brings it out of them cleansed and beautified—*mergas profundo, pulchrior exilit;* he plunges it in the deep, and it rises fairer than before.

We will not here maintain that paradox of the stoics, that *Evils which happen to good men, are not to be called evils at all;* which, however, is capable of a very good sense, since religion teaches us that the greatest evils are changed, and *work together for good,* which comes about to the same thing, and perhaps was the true meaning of the stoics. Banishment and poverty are indeed evils in one sense, that is, they have something hard and grievous in them; but when they fall on a good and brave man, they seem to lay aside the malignity of their nature, and become tame and gentle. The very sharpness of them excites and exercises virtue: by exciting, they increase it, so that the root of faith shoots the stronger, and fixes the deeper, and thereby adds new strength to fortitude and patience. And, as we see in this example before us, affliction does by a happy kind of necessity drive the soul to confess its sin, to flee as it were to seek its refuge under the wing of the Divine goodness, and to fix its hope upon God. And this is certainly one great advantage which the pious soul gains by adversity, that it calls away the affections from earth and earthly things, or rather tears them away, when obstinately adhering to them. "It is necessary that they suffer such hardships as these," as one expresses it,* "lest they should love this inconvenient stable, in which they now are obliged to lodge, as if it were their own house!" It is necessary that they should perceive that they are *strangers and foreigners upon earth,* that they may more frequently, and with more ardent desire, groan after that better country, and often repeat it, οἶκος φίλος, οἶκος ἄριστος, *Dear home! most desirable home!* The children and heirs of the kingdom must be weaned by wormwood, lest they should be so enchanted by the allurements of the flesh, and the poisonous sweetness of secular enjoyments, as to barter away the true and pure joy of their blessed hope, for this false, polluted, and deadly joy; and lest, dissolved in pleasure, the heaven-born soul should be broken under the yoke of this pernicious flesh, the root of so many passions.† Lastly, we see how much vigor and vehemence affliction adds to prayer; for the divine psalmist, the deeper he sinks, cries to God in so much the louder accents—*Out of the depths have I cried.*

This prayer contains those precious virtues which, in a grateful temperature, render every prayer acceptable to God—faith, fervor, and humility. Faith, in that he prays *out of the deeps;* fervor, in that *he cries,* and both again expressed in the next word; faith, as in the midst of surrounding calamities he does not despair of redress; fervor, as he urges it with repeated importunity, and the same word uttered again and again. And to complete all, humility expresses itself in what follows, where he speaks as one that felt himself sinking, as one who was plunged in a sea of iniquities, as well as calamities; and acknowledges he was so overwhelmed with them, as to be unable to stand, unless supported by pure mercy and grace. *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, who shall stand?* Thus, here again, faith manifests itself more clearly, together with its kindred affections of hope and charity, which, like three graces, join their hands, and by an inseparable union support each other. You have faith in the fourth verse, *There is forgiveness with thee;* hope in the fifth, *I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope;* charity in the seventh and eighth, where he does in a most benevolent manner invite all Israel to a communion of the same faith and hope, and, in order to confirm them more abundantly, does in a most animated manner proclaim the riches of the Divine benignity. Such is the composition of this excellent prayer, which thus compounded, like a pillar of aromatic smoke from myrrh, frankincense, and every other most fragrant perfume, ascends grateful to the throne of God. And this you may take instead of the analysis of the remaining verses, which to handle by a more minute dissection of words, and to clothe in the trite phrases of the schools, to speak freely, would be as barren and useless as it is easy and puerile. And indeed I can not but form the same judgment of the common way of catching at a multitude of observations from any scripture, and of pressing it with violence, as if remarks were to be estimated by number rather than weight, propriety, and use. But here let every one follow his own genius and taste; for we are willing to give the liberty we take. *Veniam damus petimusque vicissim.*

*Out of the depths.*] Oh, the immortal power of Divine faith, which lives and breathes in the midst of the waves, in which it may be plunged, but can not be sunk under any of the hugest billows: but raises itself, and the soul in which it resides, and emerges and swims above all, φελλὸς ὡς ἀβάπτιστος (like cork which will still be above water), having this in common with that Divine love of which Solomon speaks in his *Song,* that *many waters can not quench it.* Whatever great things the stoics may speak of their wise men, and whatever all philosophy may say of fortitude, it is Divine faith that truly and heartily performs all, by which the good man, though stripped of every help and comfort, wraps himself up, as it were, not in his own virtue and strength, but in that of God; and hence it is that he can not be conquered by any tyranny, by any

* Expedit omnino ut hîc dura experiantur, ne stabulum ament pro domo sua.

† Σαρξ ὀλόη, παθεων ριζα πολυσχιδέων.

threatenings, by any calamities of life, by any fear of death, for he leans upon Omnipotence. *The Lord*, says he, *is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?* Let *war arise*, let the enemy measure out his tents against me, I, says Faith, am secure *under the shadow of the Most High*, and embracing him, I will fear nothing.

You have here the psalmist crying with confidence out of the deeps. Behold also the prophet Jonah indeed, and, as we say, literally, *in the deeps*, and in circumstances which might have greater efficacy to shake his faith than the sea itself, than the bowels of the fish, or any other depth into which he might be cast, as he was not entirely free from blame, but had the intermingling guilt of his own perverseness; yet, among all these discouragements, his faith is not swallowed up: *I have cried unto thee in my distress, and from the very belly of hell. Thou hast cast me into the deep, and all thy waves were going over me*, so that I might truly say, *I am cast out from thy sight;* yet at the same time I said, *I will look again toward the temple of thy holiness.* I went down to the root and cavern of the mountains; the abyss surrounded me; yet when my soul was thus *overwhelmed within me, I remembered the Lord.* You have, among others, an excellent example of faith in David, 1 Sam. xxx., when the invading enemy had burnt Ziklag, and carried the women captive, and the people, in the madness of their rage and grief, speak of stoning David himself; yet, besieged with all these miseries, he *strengthens himself in the Lord his God.* Nor can anything have greater depth and strength than that expression of Job, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:* not only when fainting and dying, but while expiring, as it were, of the wound which I had received from the hand of God himself, yet will I hope for life and salvation from that very hand which has given me death, and in the jaws of death would send out this last word with the last breath, and with my departing soul, Destroy not, O Lord, one that trusteth in thee.

Nor is this confidence of a pious soul, an opinion fluctuating among the waves, or a light conjecture that it shall raise its head above them, but a certain, firm, and infallible assurance. That is a vulgar and weak word of comfort, "To-morrow may be better than to-day."* But the language of Divine faith is stronger and firmer, even when *deep calls unto deep*, and most certainly determines that it will not be in vain; and therefore, in the forty-second Psalm, not dubious and trembling, but with a steady voice, he silences all the noisy tumults of an agitated mind, and says, *Repose thyself on God, for I shall still praise him*, or, as it may be rendered, *I am going to praise him: q. d.* Amid all those tempests which rage about me, I am thinking of that hymn of praise which I shall pay to him for my deliverance, and for the happy exit out of all my sorrows. Though at present we have nothing in sight but darkness and whirlwinds, and rocks, and the raging, foaming sea, let the skill and power of the Great Pilot be opposed to all these. And what the psalmist says elsewhere of sailors, may evidently be applied to those who go down into the sea; they gain this by their dangers, that *they see the works* of this Great Pilot in the abyss, and contemplate *his wonders in the deep.* And he who gives himself up to his care, and fixes his eye and hope wholly on him, though he be, or rather seem to be, shipwrecked, and lose all his goods, yet, if he does not *make shipwreck of faith*, he loses nothing that is properly his own. Nay, when he is swallowed up in the abyss of death, he does not perish, but swims through it to the further shore of eternity, where he finds a banquet, a palace prepared for him, and *a kingdom that can not be moved*, but remains to endless ages.

*I cried.*] Prayer is the natural and genuine voice of the children of God; and as the Latin word *oratio* properly signifies articulate speech, as it distinguishes man from other animals, so, in this other signification, it expresses that by which the godly are distinguished from the rest of mankind: it is the proper idiom of the citizens of heaven. Others may recite some words of prayer, but they do not pray; as parrots and other birds, by the industry of their teacher, may learn to imitate human voices, yet they do not speak; there is something wanting in all their most skilful chattering, which is the very thing that is also wanting in the language of most that are said to pray, and that is, *mind* and *meaning*, affections correspondent to the words, or rather, to which the words may conform as to their original cause, and of which they may be the true index and sign. The spirit of this world knows not how to pray, nor does a *spirit of adoption and liberty* know how to forbear praying—the *spirit of adoption*, says the apostle, *by which we cry Abba, Father.* Nor can they who are newborn by that Spirit, live without frequent prayer. Prayer is to them, as the natural and necessary respiration of that new and Divine life, as Lam. iii. 56, *Turn not away from my breathing:* the Hebrew word there made use of, *leruhethi*, properly signifies the *vital respiration* of animals. Yet, notwithstanding all this, what we said above is true, and evidently appears from the passage before us, that affliction often adds vigor to prayers, how lively and assiduous soever they may have been before. Let it be so, that prayer is the natural language of believing souls, by which they daily address their heavenly Father, yet when they are pressed with an uncommon pain or danger, it is no less natural that this voice should be louder than ordinary, and should be raised into a cry. It is indeed the

* Ταχ' ἄριστον ἴσως' ἄριστον.

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breath of faith and heavenly affections, and when they are vehemently pressed by any burden, and almost expiring under it, they breathe quicker than before, and with greater effort. Thus, they who have been used to the greatest heights of daily devotion, yet, in surrounding calamities, pray more fervently and more frequently than ordinary. And this is to be numbered among the chief benefits attending afflictions and it would surely be well worth our while to experience all the hardest pressures of them, if we may gain this; that the languor, and sloth, and stupidity, into which our minds and our souls are ready insensibly to sink while all is calm and serene about us, may be happily shaken off by something which the world may call an unhappy event; that some more violent gust of wind may fan the sacred flame that seems almost extinguished, and blow it up into greater ardor. It will be happy for us, that, with the psalmist, we should sometimes *sink in deep waters*, that so we, who in prosperity do but whisper or mutter out our prayers, may from *the depths cry aloud unto God*. Oh, how frequently and how ardently did David pray in the deserts and the caves, and it is he who here cries out of the deep, and perhaps these deep recesses are those from which he was now crying; but when secure amid the ease and delights of the court, and walking at leisure on his house-top, he was tempted by his own wandering eyes, and having intermitted the fervor of prayer, burned with impure fires. Our vows are cruel to ourselves, if they demand nothing but gentle zephyrs, and flowery fields, and calm repose, as the lot of our life; for these pleasant things often prove the most dangerous enemies to our nobler and dearer life.

Oh! how true is that saying, that "faith is safe when in danger, and in danger when secure; and prayer is fervent in straits, but in joyful and prosperous circumstances, if not quite cold and dead, at least lukewarm." Oh, happy straits, if they hinder the mind from flowing forth upon earthly objects, and mingling itself with the mire; if they favor our correspondence with heaven, and quicken our love to celestial objects, without which, what we call life, may more properly deserve the name of death!

VER. 2. Lord, hear my voice; let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.

WE see that he was not only in earnest, which comparatively few that pray are, but that his desires were vehement, and kindled into a flame, which is the case of yet fewer. The smoke of the incense will not rise to heaven, unless it be kindled on the altar; and hence it is that a great part of our prayers vanish like an empty sound, and are dissipated in the air. Nor is it wonderful, as we have elsewhere observed, that those petitions do not ascend, which hardly go out, which go not forth from the depth of the breast, and therefore they rise not on high, but are born and die upon the lips. How should they live, when they have no principle of life, neither the constancy of faith, nor the love of zeal? And if he who asks timorously, much more he that asks with cold indifference, may seem to bespeak a denial.

It is not the much speaking and the vain repetition, condemned in the gospel, to redouble the same words again and again, provided it be not from want of care and affection, but if, on the contrary, it proceeds from the vehemence and exuberance of it. The great apostle tells us, that *he besought the Lord thrice*; and the Lord of the apostle, and our Lord, prayed in the garden again and again, *speaking the same words*. He that pours out his words, inattentive to what he is about, seems to me to pray long, if he utters but two sentences; though his words be ever so few and well chosen, yet is he himself foolish and verbose. For what can be more foolish than the empty noise even of the best words, when they express nothing of the mind? But he who continues long in prayer, and urges the same petitions again and again, bursting out from the fervor of an influenced breast, he, truly, prays in a vivid and solid manner, and in a manner most acceptable to God; and what Fabius says of his orator, may with great propriety be applied to him, *Pectus est, quod disertum facit, et vis mentis:* It is the heart, and the energy of the mind, that make a man truly eloquent.

*Hear me.*] The great Author of nature and of all things does nothing in vain. He instituted not this law, and, if I may so express it, art of praying, as a vain and insignificant thing, but endows it with a wonderful efficacy for producing the greatest and happiest consequences. He would have it to be the key by which all the treasures of heaven should be opened. He has constructed it as a powerful machine, by which we may, with easy and present labor, remove from us the most dire and unhappy machinations of our enemy, and may with equal ease draw to ourselves what is most propitious and advantageous. Heaven and earth, and all the elements, obey and minister to the hands which are often lifted up to heaven in earnest prayer. Yea, all works, and which is yet more and greater, all the words of God obey it. Well known in the sacred Scriptures are the examples of Moses and Joshua, and that which James (ch. v. 17), particularly mentions of Elijah, whom he expressly calls ὁμοιοπαθής, *a man subject to like infirmities* with ourselves, that he might illustrate the admirable force of prayer, by the common and human weakness of the person by whom it was offered. And that Christian legion under Antoninus is well know and justly celebrated, which, for the singular ardor and efficacy of its prayers, obtained the name of κεραυνόβολος, *the thundering legion*.

It is true, indeed, that our desires and our

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hearts are open to God, when our tongues are entirely silent, and that he has a paternal regard to all our concerns; nor do we utter our petitions to him, as if he were ignorant or negligent of our necessities and desires, for we well know that he sees and hears everything, πανθ' ὁρᾷ καὶ ἀκούει. It is also true, that his counsels are all fixed and immoveable. But it can by no means be inferred from these premises, that the business of prayer is vain and needless. And if any one would represent these things as superseding prayer, surely he deceives himself, and by all his reasonings would make out nothing, unless it were to convict himself of a vast ingratitude to the Divine munificence, and a most shameful unworthiness of so excellent a gift.

Ought not this intercourse of men with God by prayer to be most reverently and gratefully received and cultivated by all, and numbered among the chief favors of the Divine nature, and the chief dignities of the human nature? And truly this, as much as anything that can be imagined, is a lamentable argument of the stupidity of man in this fallen state, that such an honor is so little regarded. Opportunities of conversing with nobles or princes of the earth are rare and short; and if a man of inferior station be admitted to such a favor, he glories in it, as if he were raised to heaven; though they are but images made of the same clay with himself, and only set upon a basis a little higher than the rest. But the liberty of daily and free converse with the King of heaven is neglected for every trifle, and indeed is counted as nothing, though his very aspect alone fills so many myriads of blessed spirits above with full and perpetual felicity.

Again, is it not most reasonable to acknowledge, by this spiritual sacrifice of prayer, his infinite power and goodness, and that most providential care by which he governs all human affairs? And when our very being and life depend upon him, and all the comfort and happiness of life, how congruous is it to exhibit this sign and token of his holding us by the hand, and of our being borne up by him! Again, what sweeter lenitive of all those miseries with which mortal life so continually abounds, can be invented, than this, to pour out all our care and trouble into his bosom, as that of a most faithful friend and affectionate father? Then does the good man lay himself down to sleep with sweet composure in the midst of waves and storms, when he has lulled all the cares and sorrows of his heart to sleep, by pouring out his prayer to God. And once more, how pleasant is it, that these benefits, which are of so great a value both on their own account and that of the Divine benignity whence they come, should be delivered into our hands, marked, as it were, with this grateful inscription, *That they have been obtained by prayer!*

*Hear, O Lord.*] It is certain that the greater part of men, as they babble out vain, languid, and inefficacious prayers, most unworthy the ear of the blessed God, so they seem in some degree to set a just estimate upon them, neither hoping for any success from them, not indeed seeming to be at all solicitous about it, but committing them to the wind, as vain words, which in truth they are. But far be it from a wise and pious man, that he should so foolishly and coldly trifle in so serious an affair: his prayer has a certain tendency and scope, at which he aims with assiduous and repeated desires, and doth not only pray that he may pray, but that he may obtain an answer: and as he firmly believes that it may be obtained, so he firmly, and constantly, and eagerly urges his petition, that he may not flatter himself with an empty hope. For it can not be that any pious and reasonable desire should be directed toward the throne of God in vain, since he has been pleased to assume it among his titles, that he is *a God hearing prayer.* And certainly though the good man does not always obtain the very thing that he asks, yet, pure and right petitions never ascend in vain; but he who presents them, either obtains the thing he asks, or receives, instead of what is pleasing, what is truly profitable, and instead of the things that he wishes for, those that are upon the whole the fittest and best, and that in the fittest and best time. Therefore, the vehemence of prayer is to be attempered with patience and long suffering expectation. We often put ourselves, as it were, out of breath with the eagerness of speaking, and are presently weary, if we do not immediately obtain our request. Our prayers are often like those of the damsel who danced before Herod, *I will that thou presently give me* this or that. Whereas, he that prays fervently, urges this, that God would make haste to help him: but in the meantime, as he believes, he will not make haste, nor will he suffer, if the delay be ever so long, that a speech like that of the impious king of Israel should escape him, *This evil is of the Lord, and why should I wait for the Lord any longer?* 2 Kings vi. 33.

But oh, how necessary is it, that souls worshipping so pure a God, should be purged from all the earthly dregs of impure affections! Most true is that oracle of the psalmist, *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer.* The hands must be *washed in innocence*, before they can be lifted up to him with acceptance. *Draw near to God*, says the Apostle James, *and he will draw near to you;* but in order to this, he subjoins, *Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye hypocrites*, or *ye double-minded*, who are the impurest of all. These things we only briefly suggest; but I beseech you, my dear charge, that ye embrace this Divine study, that you labor to obtain this sacred art, which is the best and only way of being enriched with all the most valuable blessings, even those of a celestial origin and tendency. O think it is nothing unpleasant, nothing low

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and contemptible, to which you are now invited: on the contrary, there is nothing more delightful, nothing more sublime, than to meditate upon heavenly objects, to converse with God, and thence to imbibe a contempt of this low and transitory world, to be raised above all perishing enjoyments, and to taste the prelibations of that celestial life itself.

But how accurately soever the precepts of this Divine oratory may be delivered, none will effectually receive them, unless they are taught the skill by God himself. We must pray that we may be able to pray, and draw as it were from that superior academy that faculty of pure and pious speech which flies as with a swift, ready, and natural motion to heaven whence it came, and brings down with it the most precious gifts into the bosom of the person that utters it. And by the way, it is a most certain truth, that the greatest blessings are much more easily obtained from the great God, who is so munificent in his gifts, than others of a meaner nature; so that it were an argument of a low and abject mind, not to ask something noble and excellent. *Covet earnestly the best gifts,* in this sense. If we ask only things of a low and trifling nature, unworthy such a giver, he may answer as a prince did, "These are not royal gifts," οὐ βασιλικον τὸ δῶρον: but if we ask those things that are most precious and valuable, grace and glory, there will be no room to fear that denial, οὐκ ἀνθρώπινον τὸ λῆμμα, "It is not fit for a man to receive it." *If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more your heavenly Father!* Surely, he is goodness itself, and he gives only what is good; and the better those things are that we ask, the more freely and cheerfully does he bestow them. And you know Luke, repeating the same speech, expresses it by saying, *He shall give the Holy Spirit to them that ask it;* than which, nothing more noble can be either desired or bestowed.

VER. 3. If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand!

AMONG all the virtues which are necessary to offer up our prayers with acceptance, none ascend with greater velocity, and rise higher, than that very humility which causes them, as it were, to descend the deepest of all; nor is there any more indubitable argument of humility, than a conscience which groans under the burden of its own sin and guilt amid all the abyss of calamities, crying especially from this depth. And thus we see the psalmist, while he involves all other evils, how great soever they might be, under one common title, fixed upon this, to expatiate upon it at large. *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities,* &c. Thus, if any one desires to mount more readily and more favorably from the depth of calamity, let him cry from this depth of profound humility, and plead a penitent sense of sin. For though of all imaginable depths, that of sin be the most remote from the most high and most holy God, yet, the depths of the humble soul, depressed under the weight of sin, is nearest of all to the deep bowels of Divine mercy; so that the words of the psalmist may not improperly be accommodated to this, though in a sense something different from that which in their connexion they bear, *Deep calls unto deep,* and by an harmonious kind of *antiphony,* if I may be allowed the expression, they do most musically answer to each other.

One might have been ready, perhaps, to imagine, from the vehemence with which he begins his address, and from his groanings as it were so thick and so short, that he was a somewhat bold petitioner, and that he had some confidence in himself, seeing that he presumed to knock so often and so loud at the door of divine mercy. But what he here adds plainly shows that this was far from being the case: "*Hear me, O, Lord, hear me:* and I urge the request because necessity presses urgently upon me. Not that I am, or judge myself to be one who can merit thine assistance, but that I stand in such need of it, that if it be not granted me, I must perish. So far am I from being or appearing to myself worthy of thy help, that behold I am overwhelmed with sin more than with sorrows. It is free mercy that I invoke, and I beseech thee, that in order to thy hearing the voice of my prayer, thou wouldst not hearken to the cry of my sins. Wash away the one, that thou mayst graciously smile upon the other. For, *if thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, who shall stand?* Intimating that if he were drawn out of the other depths, yet if his sins continued unremitted, he could find no place on which to stand; yea, if it were possible for him in that case to flee away and hide himself, yet he would rather plunge himself into those depths again, and would rather be buried and lost in floods of the greatest calamities, than meet the more dreadful flame of the divine anger and indignation.

But this humble acknowledgment of his own unworthiness and pollution, is so far from being inconsistent with the pious confidence of prayer, that it is not only congruous, but even congenial to it, and inseparable from it, so as to be most agreeable to that great King whom it addresses. Humility and contrition of heart are often thought by men to be the mark of a low and abject mind, and as such are often despised by them: but nothing is more honorable in the sight of God. "He," says Augustine,* "will bow down his ear, if thou dost not lift up thy neck." There is certainly no more efficacious method of supplicating and obtaining grace, than to do it, if I may so speak, *sub forma pauperis,* confessing and pleading our poverty. He finds the most easy access in the court of heaven, who meets the most frequent repulses on earth. Nay, if I may so express myself, the heavenly court sits and resides in

* Inclinat aurem Deus, si tu non erigis cervicem.

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him. The two chief temples and palaces of the great King, are that τρισάγιον, thrice holy place in the third heaven and the humble and contrite heart upon earth. The best manner of praying, therefore, is that which is made up of faith, fear, and humility. By the equal libration of these wings, the soul mounts on high, while that of fear does not sink too low, nor that of confidence rise too high.* By these, we are daily and early to soar to God; and care must be taken that these wings of the soul be not dragged down by excess, nor scorched by lust, nor clogged and glued together, as it were, by covetousness, or any other terrene and viscid affection. But let us now a little more particularly see what this confession of the prophet was.

*If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?* An uninstructed and incautious reader might perhaps imagine that the psalmist was here seeking for refuge in a crowd, and desirous of sheltering himself under the common lot of human nature; at least, that he would endeavor to find some low excuse for himself, in the mention of its universal degeneracy. But the design of the sacred writer is far different from this. He confesses that whatever he, or any other person, on a transient and inattentive glance, may imagine of his innocence, yet, when the eye of the mind is directed inward in a serious and fixed manner, then he sees the sum and bulk of his sins to be so immensely great that he is even struck into astonishment by it; so that he finds himself beset, as it were, on every side with armed troops, which cut off all possibility of escape, otherwise than by flying to divine mercy and to the freedom of pardoning grace. He perceives himself unable to bear the examination of an awakened conscience, exercising itself in impartial self-reflection; and arguing thence, how much less he would be able to endure the penetrating eye and strict scrutiny of the divine Justice, he cries out, in horror and trembling, under an apprehension of it, *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities*, &c. He sees himself overwhelmed with crimes, held at bay, as it were, by his sins on every side, which roar around him like so many savage creatures just ready to devour him. And he that does not see this to be his own case, is either almost blind, or lives abroad, and never descends into his own breast. Gross offences alone strike the eye of our fellow-creatures: but when we seriously consider that we have to do with an All-seeing Judge, who looks at once through every covering, and sees the most secret recesses of our hearts, who considers not only what may be concealed from men, but even what is concealed from ourselves, so as most clearly to discover every the least stain and speck of our inmost soul, and whose infinite holiness must also abhor it; is it possible that any one should be so infatuated as, in such a view, still to retain a false and foolish conceit of his own innocence? It can not be doubted that they who daily and accurately survey themselves and their own hearts, though they may indeed escape many of those evils which the generality of mankind, who live as it were by chance, fall into, yet, in consequence of that very care and study, see so much the more clearly their own impurity, and contract a greater abhorrence of themselves, and a more reverential dread of the divine judgments. And it is certain that the holier any one is, the viler will he be in his own eyes, and I may also add, the viler he is in his own eyes, the more dear, precious, and honorable, will he be in the sight of God. But where is the heart, yea, I may say, where is the forehead of the generality of mankind, who boast of it as if it were some great matter to be free from the infamy of the most atrocious crimes? Have they not continually the reward of this their egregious virtue? "I have not committed murder and robbery—You are not gibbeted for the food of crows and ravens."* But they who bring the whole of their conduct, their deeds and their words, the glances of their eye, and all the inward workings of their affections, and examine them by the pure and strait rule of the divine law, so as to perceive how many and how great errors attend every most cautious day; and they who feel how wavering and weak their faith is, how lukewarm at least, if not cold, their piety and charity, how ardent their love of this world still continues, how untamed the flesh, how unguarded the senses, how unbridled the affections, how attentive their hearts to trifles, while in prayer so light and so wandering; they, I say, who perceive and reflect on this, with what poignant grief, with what overwhelming shame must they be seized, and how earnestly and how justly will they cry out, *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, who could stand?*

*If thou shouldst mark.*] If thou shouldst inquire and scrutinize, and then shouldst retain and impute (for the Hebrew word imports both): if thou shouldst inquire, thou wouldst find something of iniquity in the most righteous of mankind: and when thou hast found it, if thou shouldst retain it, and call him to an account for it, he could by no means free himself of the charge, or expiate the crime. Inquiring, thou wouldst easily find iniquity; but he by the most diligent inquiry will be able to discover no ransom, and therefore will be unable to stand, will have no place on which to set his foot, but will fall by the irresistible judgments of thy law, and the sentence of thy justice.

There have been great disputes one way and another, about the merit of good works; but I truly think they who have laboriously

* Oratio timida cœlum non attingit: temeraria resilit, et vîâ suâ frangitur.—Bernard.

* Furtum non feci—Non pascis in cruce corvos.

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engaged in them, have been very idly, though very eagerly employed about nothing, since the more sober of the schoolmen themselves acknowledge there can be no such thing as meriting from the blessed God, in the human, or to speak more accurately, in any created nature whatsoever: nay, so far from any possibility of merit, there can be no room for reward any otherwise than of the sovereign pleasure and gracious kindness of God; and the more ancient writers, when they use the word merit, mean nothing by it but a certain *correlate* to that reward which God both promises and bestows of mere grace and benignity. Otherwise, in order to constitute what is properly called merit, many things must concur, which no man in his senses will presume to attribute to human works, though ever so excellent; particularly that the thing done must not previously be matter of debt, and that it be entire, or our own act, unassisted by foreign aid; it must also be perfectly good, and it must bear an adequate proportion to the reward claimed in consequence of it. If all these things do not concur, the act can not possibly amount to merit. Whereas I think no one will venture to assert that any one of these can take place in any human action whatever. But why should I enlarge here, when one single circumstance overthrows all those titles: the most righteous of mankind would not be able to stand, if his works were weighed in the balance of strict justice; how much less then could they deserve that immense glory which is now in question! Nor is this to be denied only concerning the unbeliever and the sinner, but concerning the righteous and pious believer, who is not only free from all the guilt of his former impenitence and rebellion, but endowed with the gift of the Spirit. The interrogation here expresses the most vehement negation, and signifies that no mortal, in whatever degree he is placed, if he be called to the strict examination of Divine justice, without daily and repeated forgiveness, could be able to keep his standing and much less could he arise to that glorious height. "That merit," says Bernard, "on which my hope relies, consists in these three things; the love of adoption, the truth of the promise, and the power of its performance."* This is the threefold cord which can not be broken.

VER. 4. *But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*

THIS is the genuine method of Divine grace: it first demands a mind void of all confidence in itself, that so it may be filled with a pure and entire trust in God. For though that blind self-confidence which is so natural to us, be flatulent and empty, yet while it possesses the mind, it is as it were blown up by it; and that swelling breaks off everything more solid, and prevents its access even when it seems to surround us on every side. Yea, it seems that the riches and magnificence of Divine grace can not with so much decency communicate itself, when it is, as it were, straitened by the receiver; for since it is so great as to be able to fill everything, it requires a free and ample space in which to dilate itself. He who in the first original of the new-born world brought all things out of nothing acts like himself in the regeneration and restoration of mankind to holiness. The Holy Spirit finds nothing but *Tohu va Bohu*, nothing but what is *without form and void;* and whoever of mankind perceives and acknowledges this to be his case, may be assured that the Spirit of God already begins to move upon him to impregnate the face of the abyss; and then it is said concerning them, *Let there be light, and there is light*, even that light by which they see themselves unformed and dark, and destitute of everything that is good. It is a great sign of a soul beginning to emerge from its misery, to give up every hope of emerging from it, except that one which arises from free mercy alone. And in this sense, it may truly be said, as it is by the poet,

*Una salus miseris nullam sperare salutem:*
"The wretched find no safety but despair—"

*i. e.*, in themselves, in their own righteousness or innocence, their own industry in fulfilling the law, or any expiation they can make for the breach of it. And what the apostle says of his own danger, may, properly enough, be applied to a confession of the soul, pressed under the burden of its own guilt. *We had received the sentence of death in ourselves, that we might not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead.* 2 Cor. i. 9. For the exclamation before us bears a remarkable resemblance to that expression, *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.* He who from justice found not any ground upon which he might stand, finds in mercy a place from which he may rise again. And this is the remedy of all our grief and distress, and in this sense we must be sick that we may recover, and must die that we may live. Grace exerts its power, where nature and art, and all the excellency and strength of human nature, fail; nor does any soul celebrate the Divine benignity more signally than those who are snatched as it were out of the flames when they are beginning to seize them, and being rescued from the very jaws of hell, return to life again, and breathe in the land of the living.

That trite distinction of sin into mortal and venial, which is so common among the schoolmen, is not only vain and destitute of all support from the word of God, but is indeed very faulty, and far from being itself

* Meritum, cui innititur spes mea, tribus hisce constat, charitate adoptionis, veritate promissionis, et potestate, redditionis.



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venial, well deserves to be exploded as mortal, for that malignant influence which it has upon the morals of men. If the most open danger of the Divine displeasure and of eternal death, can not hinder the bold race of men from rushing on headlong to every crime,* and breaking all the barriers of duty which God has prescribed them, will it not add great licentiousness to all the crowd and tumult of headstrong desires, when some sins are said to be by their own nature, and in the whole kind of them, free from the condemning sentence of the Divine law? But what I here oppose, is this; give me the holiest man upon earth, the man who above all others stands at the remotest distance, both in the affections of his mind and in the conduct of his life, from those sins which they acknowledge as mortal, will he not deeply feel his need of daily forgiveness, from the multiplied pollutions of his daily infirmities? He truly accounts no sin little, which is committed against the great and ever-blessed God, nor any pardon little, which he knows to proceed from his infinite grace. Nor will he promise himself the pardon of the least fault which he indulges: nor will he despair of obtaining a pardon of the greatest for which he is truly penitent. And this is the law of grace. The poet said with a great deal of justice, "That no sinner is absolved by himself," because he is as it were turned informer against himself.† Yet, in another sense, the sinner is absolved by that very self accusation, and sorrowing for his sins, is freed from the guilt of them. For it is not by any means to be conceived that any one can return into favor with God, unless he return to God; nor that any one can return to God, unless he renounce every sin: which if he does, they are all entirely forgiven, and those which he eagerly desires to cast behind his back, shall never rise up to condemn him to his face, before the tribunal of the Divine justice. This sentiment runs through all the evangelical discourses of the prophets, by which, as so many heralds, they call a rebellious people to return to the allegiance of God, their supreme King: *Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.* Yea, the very Fountain of Grace, the Lord of the prophets, who is himself the great author and the sum of the gospel doctrine, as soon as ever he came forth to publish this grace, said, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* Nor can any mind that is not fallen into utter madness and complete distraction, dream of a pardon, how ample and glorious soever, to be imparted to a sinner who will not repent or return. Nor indeed can it be so much as wished. For how unworthy would it be of the Divine Majesty and Wisdom, to throw away such precious graces on those who so obstinately despise them! *But there is forgiveness with thee*—which is added with the utmost propriety; with him there is a treasure of mercy laid up, to be imparted most freely and richly to every humble sinner that applies to him for it. Nor is the dispensing of grace in this way at all inconsistent with the richness and freeness of it, since the greatest sins, the most aggravated crimes, are absolutely forgiven, without any penalty or fine whatsoever imposed upon the offender, yet, on this most reasonable and happy condition, that they who are thus received into the Divine favor should express their grateful acknowledgments for it, by love, obedience, and sanctity of life. Neither is this forgiveness the less free and gracious, because Jesus Christ, as our surety and redeemer, has paid the price of it, having been appointed for and destined to this great and arduous work by the Father. For what does that great Father of mercies herein, but, in order to our complete discharge, by one certain, and ever-to-be-admired way, satisfy himself of his own, by fastening his only begotten Son to the cross? The repository of this treasure is opened, the whole price is poured out at once, that great price of redemption, more precious than all the treasures, than all the mines of gold in the world, or even the whole world itself. But they who anxiously debate the point, whether God could simply and absolutely pardon sin without any price, do but trifle; for whatever may be supposed concerning that, who is there that will deny that this way of the salvation of men which God has chosen, is so full of stupendous mystery, and so illustrious, if I may so speak, for that *trine* and to us most benign *aspect* of wisdom, justice, and mercy, that nothing can be thought of more worthy the Divine Majesty, nothing sweeter, nothing more munificent with respect to unworthy man? So that, it will appear, Athanasius speaks very prudently when he says, "We ought not in this matter so much to consider the absolute power of God, as what is most advantageous to man, and what most worthy of the Divine Being."*

It was fit that our wise Creator should give us a law, and that law was both useful and pleasant to those who would carefully observe it; but when once violated, there would necessarily arise a fatal enmity between the law and the transgressors of it, an enmity which would continually become progressive, and gather new strength in the progress. But as for our obstinacy, what is it more than πρὸς κέντρα λακτίζειν, *to kick against the pricks?* The law is inviolably safe in its own sanctity, dignity, and immortality; but we, by striving against it, what do we gain but iniquity, disgrace, and death? So that if there were no umpire to interpose, there would be no hope, but that the whole human

* Audax omnia perpeti
Gens humana, ruit per vetitum nefas.—HORACE.

† Se indice nemo nocens absolvitur.

* Οὐκ οὖπως δεῖ ἐν τούτῳ πραγματι τὸ ἀνλῶς τοῦ θεοῦ δύνατον λογίζεσθαι, ὡς τὸ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις λυσιτελέστερον καὶ πάνυ γε ὁμῶς θεοπρεπέστερον.

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kind should perish. But that blessed and efficacious Intercessor came from on high; and certainly he was himself a Divine person, who could compose such a controversy, and who joining, by an indissoluble union, his infinitely better with our miserable and mortal nature, did so, by a most wonderful method, render to the law all its accuracy of obedience, and to us, though guilty, impunity. And having thus made peace, that concord might afterward continue and prevail, he animates all who partake of this blessed peace, by his own new, pure, and Divine Spirit, that they might not only be engaged sincerely to endeavor to observe diligently the sacred precepts of the law, but might love them, and cordially embrace them. At the same time, he hath tempered the severity of the law toward all those that are received into favor, that their diligent, pious, and affectionate observance of the law, though not entirely complete, should, by our indulgent Father, be most graciously accepted, even as if it were perfect. And so the honor of the Divine Legislator is secure among men, and his peace descends upon them; and this is what our text observes, *There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*

It is well known, that *the fear of God* is commonly used in Scripture to signify, not only the whole of his worship, but all pious affections whatsoever, and consequently the whole of true religion. And some translate the expression here, *that thou mayest be reverently worshipped;* and it is thus used with the greatest propriety. I speak of that fear which is so far from denoting the servile, hostile dread and terror which some might think of, that, on the contrary, it entirely excludes it, being properly a reverence tempered with love. Yet I do not think that we are to exclude all dread of punishment and vindictive justice under the name of a servile and disingenuous fear; nay, I apprehend such a fear to be very necessary even to those who most ardently love, as long as they live in the flesh, in order to tame and rein in the petulancy of it; yea, love itself places fear as a kind of bit and bridle to the flesh. Psalm cxix. 128, *My flesh trembles for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.* Heb. xii. *ult.*, *Let us serve God with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire.* This is the fear which is called *the beginning of wisdom*, and which is marked with other very high titles of honor in the sacred Scriptures; without which, we can neither conceive the beginning of divine worship and true piety, nor pursue the improvement of it.

As this holy and pure fear is the compendium and summary of religion, so this pardon and free remission of sins is the great foundation and support of that fear and religion. As the whole human race is defiled with sin, the despair of pardon would entirely drive us away from God, and precluding all ways of returning, would plunge the offender headlong into eternal banishment and eternal hatred.

*With thee is forgiveness, that thou mayst be feared;* that men may not dread thee and flee thee as an inexorable judge and enemy, but may reverence, love, and serve thee, as a mild and gracious Lord, as a most merciful and loving father. And this is that joyful message of the gospel, to which sinners run, as soon as they hear and understand it, prostrating themselves with all humility at the feet of so mild a Lord and so gracious a king. "For no one," as Ambrose says, "will think of repenting, but he who hopes for indulgence."* This merciful God calls back to his favor, those who are as it were flying from it, saying, *Return, ye apostates and rebels, and I will pardon and heal your backslidings.* And they, as if their bowels sounded to the unison note of mercy, with reciprocal penitence and love, answer, *Behold we come unto thee, for thou art Jehovah our God.* And this is what the great messenger and author of our salvation preached and set forth: *Repent*, says he, *for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* You are not now pursued by wrath and vengeance, threatening utterly to extirpate you and cut you off, but *the kingdom of heaven*, the dispensation of love, mercy, and grace, opens its bosom to embrace you, and freely offers you the full pardon of all your former obstinacy and rebellion. Behold the compassionate father meeting that prodigal son who had so basely run from him, while yet afar off on his return, and, instead of chiding and upbraiding him, burying not only all his sins, but even his very confession, as in a deluge of love, amidst the tenderest embraces, kisses, and tears. *Make me to hear* says David, *the voice of joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.* By that lamentable fall, he had as it were dashed himself against the rock of Divine justice, so that all his bones were broken; but what a *voice of joy and gladness* is that which should restore full soundness and strength to bones which had thus been crushed and shattered to pieces! Surely, it is no other voice than that so often used by our Savior in the gospel, *Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee.* That was the *grace*, softer than oil, sweeter than roses, *which flowed from his lips* into the sinner's wounds, and which being poured into the contrite heart, not only heals, but blesses it, yea, and marks it out for eternal blessedness. But alas! the greater part of sinners sleep in their misery, and though their distempers are mortal, feel them not. It is therefore no great wonder, that this grace, this precious, this invaluable remedy, is despised by them. But oh, how sweet is the voice of pardon to a soul groaning under the burden of sin!

* Nemo meditabitur pœnitentiam, nisi qui sperarerit indulgentiam.

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*——Quale per æstum*
*Dulcis aquæ saliente sitim restinguere rivo :*
" Sweet as the living stream to summer thirst."

But, as one well expresses it, "He that has never known discomfort, knows not what consolation means. Men of this world, entangled in the cares of life and in its crimes, insensible of misery, attend not to mercy."* But if any who imagine themselves partakers of this forgiveness, do not at the same time feel their hearts struck with a pious fear of the divine majesty, let them know that their joys are all self-invented dreams, since it is for this very end that *there is forgiveness with God even that he may be feared.*

In the remainder of this psalm, the author asserts his confidence in God, and labors to confirm and establish that of all true believers.

VER. 5. I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.
VER. 6. My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning ; I say, more than they that watch for the morning.
VER. 7. Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.
VER. 8. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

*I wait for the Lord.*] With thee is mercy. They who heartily believe this, are drawn by that sweet and amiable force of desire, to be partakers of it. And certainly, there is no true faith in the doctrine of salvation, unless it be attended with this magnetic force by which it draws the soul to God. One would think it were impossible, where this effect is not produced, that there should be so much as an historical faith ; and surely it is contrary to, and inconsistent with, the rational nature, to see so desirable and excellent a good aid down before us, and freely offered, without running most freely to embrace it with open arms, and an ardent impetuosity of soul.

The *faith* therefore, of vulgar and merely nominal Christians, is quite *dead*, and deserves not the name of faith at all. I mean, that which is not sufficient to excite them earnestly to desire and expect that divine grace in which they say they believe. True and lively faith is the eye of the inner man, which beholds an infinitely amiable God, the lucid and perpetual fountain of grace, and is by the view immediately kindled into most fervent love. That divine light which is sent from heaven into the soul, is the vehicle of heat too, and, by its ardent rays, presently sets the heart on fire: the flame rises sublime, and bears all the affections of the mind with it, toward that consummate beauty which it renders visible.

When a philosopher was asked, why that which is fair attracts our love, he answered, " It is the question of a blind man," τύφλου ἐρώτημα. Well then might the psalmist, when he had been contemplating the divine goodness, represent himself as quite transported with its charms: *q. d.* " It is nothing earthly, nothing mortal, that is the object of my wish ; my soul hangs on the Lord alone. *It thirsts for thee*, and till it arrives at the enjoyment of thee, it will still be waiting. Hasten, Lord, to support and comfort me, *for I am sick with love ; nor is there anything in heaven or earth beside thee, O Lord*, which can satiate or delight this soul of mine, pierced through, as it were, with this sacred passion. And though I am, and feel myself to be, most unworthy of loving thee, or of hoping ever to enjoy thee, yet my meanness and vileness, even when compared with thine immense majesty and sublimity, do not so much deter me, as thy boundless clemency and goodness, added to thy truth, while I have thy word of promise before mine eyes for my support, sustain me and animate my courage. Therefore, while my love and desires are most ardent, I will nevertheless expect and wait with inward patience and perseverance ; and though a heart which loves like mine must find a delay grievous, yet unshaken hope shall alleviate that sickness of the soul. Just *as they that watch for the morning*, however they may be afflicted with the darkness and coldness of the night, are constantly supported with the assured hope that the dawn will come, and the day arise in all its glory."

Nor does the psalmist envy others their share in those felicities which arise from love and hope ; on the contrary, with a cheerful and liberal mind, he invites all to this immense ocean of riches, which is not shut up, but free to all. *Let Israel hope in the Lord.* And, lest the confluence of such vast numbers should suggest any fears of straitness and want, he confidently declares that there is wealth enough, and more than enough, to supply all their necessities: *For with the Lord*, says he, *there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption ;* grace rich and copious enough to support all sinners, and to forgive all sins ; and all that apply to it shall infallibly find that *he redeems Israel from all his iniquities.* The eye of faith is by no means evil, but bright and sparkling with unbounded charity: it wishes all good to all, and above all, wishes them a beatific union with the supreme and infinite Good. As in that kingdom of glory there is no malignity, no envy, because there can be no straitness, but, according to that emphatical saying of our blessed Savior, *There are many mansions,*— there is boundless space, and the seats of pious souls are not marked out in any narrow boundaries, but in an ample court ; so even in the previous kingdom and banquet of grace, our heavenly father's house is magnificent, both on account of its amplitude, and the rich provision which it contains.

Let me beseech you, therefore, strictly to

* Quisquis autem desolationem non novit, nec consolationem agnoscere potest. Homine seculi negotiis et flagitiis implicati, dum miseriam non sentiunt, misericordiam non attendunt.—BERNARD.

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examine your own souls. Inquire what it is that they chiefly wish, hope, and desire; whether they give chase as it were to every painted fly; whether, *forsaking the fountain of living waters*, they are digging for themselves *cisterns* of clay, and those leaky too, with great and unprofitable labor. O! wretched deceitfulness of every earthly hope, which mocks and deludes us so much the more in proportion to the extravagance of its promises! Blessed are they, and only they, who fix their eyes and their souls above, and say with the psalmist, *Lord, I wait on thee, my soul does wait, and in thy word do I trust;* and, as elsewhere, *And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee.* Happy they who have quitted all those low desires and pursuits, which are unworthy of a generous and immortal spirit, and have fixed their love on one; whose heart and hopes are set upon that one, in whom all things excellent meet and centre. A cheerful joy always shines on their face; nor do their cheeks glow with the shame of repulse and disappointment. While we are wandering hither and thither in the vicious and perplexed pursuit of flattering objects, what frequent lamentations, what fond complaints of delusive fortune, and that tragical outcry, ἰώ ἰὼ τραυμάτων ἐτωδύνων, of grievous and painful wounds! What crowds of fears and cares divide the mind, and hurry it, now one way, and now another! But when we fix our hope and our hearts on the only support, on the only true and all-sufficient good, all is safe, and the soul treads firm while the whole globe trembles. Let external things be borne this way or that, there is peace within; nor, when all methods have been examined, can any other be found for the establishment of the mind, than that it should lay all its stress upon the one immoveable and immutable rock.

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## A FRAGMENT ON PART OF THE EIGHTH PSALM.

THAT which it is needful and competent for us to know concerning God, he hath been pleased to reveal; and our most excellent and happy employment in this world, is, to learn it.

The third verse of this Psalm affords us clearly the doctrine of the creation. That part in the psalmist's eye, *the heavens*, being the highest and largest of the visible world, surrounding and containing all the rest, is mentioned; *the work of thy fingers*, importing the curious embellishments of them; *the moon and stars which thou hast ordained*—placed them in their orbits, and set them a-going, and appointed them the periods and revolutions which they observe. So, the same hand hath fetched all other things out of the same nothing, as we have it in the beginning of this Book, *In the beginning God created*, &c. And it is therefore to be believed, because we find it there. Can the Worker, and his operation, be discovered by strength of reason? Certainly, they who have been of most confessed and famous ability in that way, have been partly of another mind; and we see it reduced to its truest principle, Hebrews xi. 4: *By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.* Yet this we may boldly affirm, that there is not only nothing in sound reason crossing it, but that all the cavils alleged against it are most weak of themselves; and there be many things in nature that plead strongly for it, which we may, yea, ought to take notice of.

The continual turnings and changes of things, the passing of one thing to another, the destruction of some things, and the production of others, and the general decaying of all, the very heavens waxing old as a garment, declare that the whole frame is mutable and corruptible, and therefore not from eternity, but terminable in its beginning.

There is in this a very strong appearance of the beginning of the world and of time being according to the sacred history we have of it, and which faith receives; that there are not any records nor any memoirs or history of time, or things, producible in the world, that go higher up, no, nor any human histories that go near so high. Now, if there were thousands of ages before, whence is so deep a silence of what passed in them?

They who can conceive it, may take this reason into consideration, that if the world had been from eternity, then, certainly, the number of revolutions would be infinite; now, to that which is so, nothing can be added; so that it were impossible there could be any new days or years, &c. But, above all dispute, we believe it upon His word, who by his word gave all things a being. The whole Trinity, as in all things without, they are together equally concerned, so in that first and great work of making all things.

As by the Father, so by the word were all things made, and the Spirit moved upon the face of the deep: BARAH ELOHIM—Trinity in unity, *created*.

It is most vain to inquire why the world was not created sooner, *in tempore;* yea, it is nonsense, for the same question might equally be moved whensoever the world had been made, though it had lasted now millions of years; still there would have been an eternity preceding, wherein it *was not:* and time itself was concreated. Nor was there any preexistent unformed matter. It is a poor, shallow conceit, that any such thing was needful to the Almighty. It is even a monstrous, absurd conceit, that any such thing was possible, and destroys itself; for if this framed world could not have a being from eternity, much less frameless matter; so, of necessity,

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all things were made of nothing, received a being from the Infinite Being, as the spring of all being. His hands stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth. His fingers set them all in this sweet and admirable order, in a beautiful frame.

Now these expressions are suited to our reach, but the truth is, his finger and his whole hand are all one, and his hand is his word. Psalm xxxiii. 6; Gen. i. 3. And his word is his all-powerful and eternal will; that is the breath of his mouth, and his stretched-out arm. *He said*, that is, he willed it, *and it was so.* When as yet there was no man nor angel, no heaven nor earth, no time nor being, but the alone blessed Trinity, eternally self-happy, upon the simple act of his absolute will came forth this whole frame, out of the womb of Omnipotence. And this is that certain truth which we believe under the name of *creation*.

This supposed, it is very easy to conceive, yea, it is impossible to question it, that it had been as easy for THAT Power to have brought forth all in complete perfection at one instant, as to have divided the work into six days. And as we can not think it easier, so we can not but think it better, since he chose, yea, because he chose it, as for that reason better. Well may his will be sufficient cause why that way of his production of all things was better, seeing that his will was purely the cause of the production and being of all.

But in part we may observe some advantage in that way, that he made so many days' work of it, and proceeded by degrees to bring it to perfection; that we might the more clearly perceive, and more distinctly consider, the greatness and excellency of the work, and the wise contrivance of it in its several parts and progress, which we could not so well comprehend altogether. Now, we consider him as first framing one great mass, and then proceeding to beautify it, first with that which is indeed the first beautifier of all things, *light*, and then ordered the successive interchange of it with its opposite, darkness, that sets it off and makes its beauty appear the more, giving them their terms in *day* and *night;* then proportioning and dividing the rooms of the great house into upper and lower, according to his model and design; then decorating them with rich furniture, and providing all kinds of store in great variety and abundance. And thus, having first prepared all, having built, beautified, and replenished so stately a palace, then framed he the guest for whom he intended it, and whom he appointed to dwell in it. *Then he said, Let* US *make man after our image.* Thus, the work of itself, and the order of it, and all the parts, carry on them HIS name who formed them. How do his power, and wisdom, and goodness, appear in them! And yet how little do we see and observe it! It shines bright in all his works, but we are blind; we look on *them*, and see *him* not. Oh, what a childish, trifling thing is man in all his ways, till he learns to remark God in all, and to have his soul upon all occasions musing and admiring, and sweetly losing itself in God, that immense sea of excellencies! What a bottomless wonder is that Power, from which, by a simple act of will, issued forth all being! This vast fabric, and all things in it, he willed they should be, and where never anything was, *there* appeared, on a sudden, heaven and earth: the earth settled upon his word, so that it can not be moved, and enriched with such a variety of plants, and flowers, and fruits growing forth, and springs and mines within the bowels of it; the seas fitted for navigation, together with the multitudes of creatures in it, small and great, and the impetuousness of it, yet confined and forced to roll in its channel, so that it can not go forth; the small sands giving check to the great waters. Oh, how strong and large that Hand, which without help expands the heavens as a curtain! Look up and see, consider their height and roundness, such a glorious canopy set with such sparkling diamonds: then think how swift their motion, and yet imperceivable to us, no motion here below comparable, and yet they seem not to stir at all. And in all, their great Lord and ours so conspicuous! And yet who looks on them with such an eye as to behold him, as David here, *When I consider thy heavens, the work*, &c.! He is admirable in all: the very lowest and smallest creatures have their wonders of Divine wisdom in their frame, more than we are able to think. *Magnus in minimis:* He is great in the least of his works. The smallest flies, how strange the fashioning of the organs of life and use in so little room! The man who is still in search of wisdom will find a school and a lesson in all places, and see everywhere the greatness and goodness of his God. If he walk forth in the evening, when this lower world is clothed with the dark mantle of the night, yet still he can look upward to the pavement of the throne of God, and think how glorious it is on the other side, when the moon and stars make this side, even in the night, so beautiful. And this of David's, looks like a night meditation by the view of moon and stars. *Thy heavens*, these thy works so glorious—thou, therefore, infinitely more glorious; then can I not but increase in wonder, that, dwelling above these heavens, thou regardest so poor a worm as man creeping on this earth.

*What is man!* "Enosh," *weak, mortal man;* and "Ben-Adam," *the son of earth*, the earthly man. David was taught so to look on his mean part and low condition, and on his better part, as follows, ver. 5, as a sort of divinity being freely conferred upon him.

Thus men should learn to view themselves in this twofold light. *By the grace of God I am that I am*, saith St. Paul. Truly man is a wretched and proud creature, a bundle of vanity and vileness; and yet he thinks himself some great matter while God is hid

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from him, and he is ignorant of HIS greatness.

No discourse or reasoning will humble the foolish heart of man; though he be even of the most worthless and basest sort of men, and hath in this condition nothing but what is despicable, yet he flatters himself with some fancy or other, some imagined advantage that swells him. He can not be truly vile in his own eyes till they look up to the excellency of God, and return from that down upon himself. Then he is forced to bow, and fall low, and abhor himself in dust and ashes. Once he was wise and powerful, or some way deserving (as he thought) to be respected; but now the glory and sublimity of God make him to be as nothing in his own eyes. *What is man!* David, a great and a good man, a king and a prophet, and yet a man, viewing and comparing himself with his own eyes, in respect of the great King of all the world, he cries out, *What is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him?* These words deserve to be considered. Thou mindest him in all these things, the works above him, even in the framing of these heavens, the moon and the stars, designing his good; thou makest all attend and serve him. It is not an empty *visiting* of him, but thou seest all his necessities and providest for them. He sets his heart on man, and all his delights are with the sons of men. Prov. viii. 31.

But above all visits, that visit is to be remarked and admired, when the Eternal Word, by whom this world was made, came down, and was *made flesh;* came from his glorious palace, from the bosom of the Father, to visit man in that deep and profound abyss of misery into which he was fallen, and to lift him out of it, and cleanse, and clothe, and dignify him; came to make the slaves of Satan sons of God. And the psalmist points at Christ, as the following words are applied, Heb. ii. 9. This is a descending indeed, which the angels are still prying into, looking into for the bottom, and can not see it, for it hath none. Oh, that Christ should be disregarded, and his love slighted! *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.* John i. 10. He, the same who became like unto us, and united our flesh to his blessed Deity, did give a being to all things, and *by him all things consist.* Colossians i. 17.

Our Head and Savior is no less than the mighty power, Creator of the world. He who is our flesh, he who had his arms wrapped up in swaddling-clothes, and afterward stretched upon the cross, he it was who stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth. The weight of the love of so great a King should press us low. And then, the persuasion of his almighty power assures us of complete redemption; for our salvation is in a sure and strong hand. We have a mighty Redeemer: *Thy Maker is thy husband, the Lord of hosts is his name, and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall he be called.*

*When I behold,* says the psalmist.

The carnal mind sees God in nothing, not even in spiritual things, his word and ordinances. The spiritual mind sees him in everything, even in natural things, in looking on the heavens and the earth, and all the creatures—THY *heavens;* sees all in that notion, in their relation to God as his work, and in them his glory appearing; stands in awe, fearing to abuse his creatures and his favors to dishonor. *The day is thine, and the night also is thine;* therefore ought not I to forget thee through the day, nor in the night.

All that I use, and all that I have, is not mine, but thine, and therefore all shall be *for* THEE; thou art my aim and scope in all. Therefore God quarrels with his people, because they had forgotten this. Hos. ii. 8, &c. The most are strangers to these thoughts; they can eat, drink, and sleep, lie down and rise up, and pass one day after another, without one reverend or affectionate thought of God. They may give him a formal good-morrow, and then farewell for all the day long; they offer up their prayers (as they speak), and think they have done enough, and that afterward their hearts may go whither they will, provided they escape grosser sins; they never check themselves in wandering from God all the day, if they fall not into some deep mire.

But even they who are somewhat more mindful of God, and see him in his works, and consider them so as to observe him in them, yet are very faulty in thinking of him seldom, and in the slightness of such thoughts; they are not deep in them. We do not accustom ourselves to walk with God, to a continued and delightful converse with him, to be still with him. We can turn our eyes no way but he is visible and legible; and if he were our delight, and his name sweet to us, we should eye that more in everything, than the things themselves.

The heart will readily espy and take hold of every small occasion of remembering that which it loves. That which carries any impression of the person on whom the affection is set is more looked upon on that side, and in that reference, than any other.

Certainly, were God the choice of our hearts, our natural use and enjoyment of things would not relish so much with us, nor take us up so much, as the viewing of him in them all. In our affairs and our refreshments, in company and apart, in the beholding of heaven and earth, and all that is round about us, our eye would be most on HIM whom our soul loveth. What a pity, and what a shame is it, that we who profess ourselves to be his children, and even they who truly are so, should so little mind our Father and his greatness and glory, who is continually minding us and our good! It is indeed

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a double standing wonder in the world which he hath made, that God should take so much notice of man, and man should take so little notice of God.

Were this known truth of the creation wisely improved, we should find much in it that we commonly observe not, at least that we use not. This one thing, surely, it might gain upon us, to fear his displeasure who is so great, and so powerful, who hath the whole host of heaven, and the great army of all creatures, at his command.

What he commands they must obey; for he commanded and they were made: they have their being from his command. How quickly can he crush those who proudly rebel against him! How easily can he shake them to pieces, the greatest and the strongest of them! He poureth contempt upon princes. Yea, what are they? Base potsherds of earth striving with their Maker, though somewhat bigger than others, yet as easily broken by his sceptre. O you that, after all warnings, dare walk on in your wicked ways, in drunkenness, or swearing, or any secret heart wickedness, you know not who is your party; the great God, the Former of all things. *Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?* You who do not fear him are in a fearful estate. Learn to know him, and seek unto him. *Seek the Lord, and ye shall live. Seek him who hath the seven stars, and Orion; who turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night.* Amos v. 8.

There is in this a strong ground of spiritual confidence, both for the church's concernment and our own in every state. This first work of God rightly looked on, answers all the difficulties of the greatest works we can expect at his hands. Let Zion's enemies grow to their highest, they can not rise so high as to be above this Almighty God, who framed the heavens. Let the church be brought to the lowest depths of distress, yet can not she fall so low, but his everlasting arm is long enough to reach her, and draw her out of it, which drew the whole world out of nothing. He doth therefore often represent, by his prophets, this very work as a certain evidence of his unbounded power. See Isa. xliii. 13: xliv. 24; and li. 12, 13: Jer. li. 19, 20: Zech. xii. 1. What task can be so great as to surcharge him, who so easily brought forth a world? What number can be too small, what instrument too weak in his hand, for the greatest work, who, without either working instrument or materials, built such a palace?

*Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel* — Why? Wherefore have they no reason to fear, they being but as a worm?— *I will help thee, saith the Lord. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp thrashing instrument with teeth, and thou shalt thrash the mountains, and make the hills chaff.* Isa. xli. 15. A worm in thyself, but in my hand a thrashing instrument. Weak Jacob and his strong God are too hard for all the world.

On the other side, what serve multitudes without him? All were originally nothing, and when He wills, they prove as nothing. Severed from his concurrence, as ciphers, multiply them as you will, still they signify nothing. Ten thousand men, without God, are ten thousand *nothings*. We have had very late and very clear experiment of this, both to our grief and to our comfort. But both are forgotten, and indeed were never duly considered; for if they had, they would not so soon, yea, they truly would never be forgotten by us. Well, however, it grieveth us, by reason of our own continuing hard in wickedness. Yet this I am sure of, that the strong arm of the Lord is engaged in this work: he hath already appeared in it, and therefore will not let it fall; and though we were at a lower ebb than lately we were, yet should we rise again by his strength. Doubt it not, the enemies of our peace shall be ashamed, and God shall be yet more glorious in the world than ever, not only in our outward deliverance, but in that which is far richer and of higher beauty, the power and glory of his ordinances. He shall make things that *are not*, to *be*, by the mighty power of his mouth, and throughout the world, Jesus Christ shall go on conquering. In his name lies the reason of his prevailing. His name is called THE WORD OF GOD, that same word by which all things were made: therefore no opposite power is able to stand before him. It is a great work to ruin great Babel, but his strength is enough for it. Mighty is the Lord God who judgeth. It is a great work to restore his church, but here is power enough for it, and it is spoken of under the resemblance of the creation, Isa. li. 16.

For the estate of thy soul, thou that art thoughtful of that, what cause hast thou to suspect? Is there any plea left for distrust in thy lowest condition? Thou art about great things, and findest all, not only difficulties, but impossibilities to thee. Good is it that thou shouldst find it so, and be emptied of all fancy of self-strength. But then, look up above thyself, and all *created*, to a *creating* power. If thou canst not subdue thy lusts and iniquities, resolve to wrestle. Wrestle as thou wilt, still they are too hard for thee; but look to him who came to destroy the works of Satan. Hath not thy Almighty Lord resolved to do it for thee? Thou findest nothing within but blindness and hardness, canst not repent, nor believe, nor think a right thought of God. It is so. But one word from him can do all this, and make all those to subsist that now are not. Therefore, lay thyself before him, as *dead*, yea as very nothing. Say, "Lord, I am nothing of all that which constitutes the being of a Christian in holiness, in faith, in love: but speak thou the word, and I shall be a

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new creature, to thy praise. There is nothing upon my soul but darkness; but art not thou HE who said, 'Let there be light, and there was light?' That word, again, Lord, say it to my soul, and it shall be so." Think not to bring anything with thee. Renovation is as absolute and free a work, as creation. Could his creature oblige him to make it, before it had a being? No more can it oblige him to save it, or to give it a new being in Christ: all is free. The miracles of Christ, signs of power and goodness, are preludes to his greater work. It is most senseless to have a thought of preventing *him*, from whom all good and all being flow. And this he does: *If any be in Christ, he is a new creature:* the word is, *all made new*, new delights and desires, and thoughts new —a new heaven and a new earth—a new soul, and a new body; renewed in holiness, sanctified, and made conformable to Jesus Christ. And when thou findest some work of grace, which thou canst not wholly deny, and yet wantest that peace and joy which thou desirest, look to him for that too. Thou findest it not from the word preached; yet, he can speak it, and even by that word wherein formerly thou didst not find it. It is *the fruit of the lips*, but it is so withal, that it is his creation: he only causes it to be. *I create the fruit of the lips, peace, peace.* Isa. lvii. 19. The Father wrought by the Son in the first creation, but in a new and special manner works by him in this second creation. He is that *word made flesh*, who is the life and the spring of all the grace and comfort thou desirest or readest of. Go to him: he delights to let forth his mercies to thirsting souls; to revive them, to restore or turn them again, when they are in a swoon, as the word is, Psalm xxiii. The more thou puttest him to it, the more shalt thou find his prevailing power, and the fulness of grace that dwells in him, which is no more diminished by all he shows forth, than his divine power was weakened by the framing of the world. There is no scarcity of spirit in him; therefore, he proclaimed it as plural: *If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believeth in me, out of his belly shall flow* RIVERS *of living water.*

*How manifold are thy works, O Lord!* says the psalmist, Psalm civ. 24; and then he adds that wherein all the variety of them agrees, the holding forth of his incomparable wisdom, from whose wisdom they are: *In wisdom thou hast made them all.* As they are some of them more excellent than others, they certainly do, in a clearer and more eminent degree, glorify God. In the great fabric, that part which hath the place, the heavens, hath also this advantage; the greatness of the great Architect appears somewhat more bright in them. Therefore are they singled out from the rest for that purpose, both here, ver. 3, and Psalm xix. 1. But beyond all the rest, and even beyond *them*, are the wisdom and goodness of God displayed in the framing of his reasonable creatures.

There are of them two stages; the one higher, the angels, the other lower, yet, but *a little lower*, man: as here, we have them together.

*Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels*—of the nature of a spirit, a rational, intelligent spirit— * * * *

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# EXPOSITORY LECTURES ON PSALM XXXIX.*

## LECTURE I.

VER. 1. I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.

CERTAINLY it is a high dignity that is conferred upon man, that he may as freely and frequently as he will, converse with him who made him, the great king of heaven and earth. It is, indeed, a wonder, that God should honor poor creatures so much; but it is no less strange, that men having so great privileges, the most part of them do use them so little. Seldom do we come to him in times of ease. And when we are spurred to it by afflictions and pains, commonly we try all other means rather than this, which is the alone true and unfailing comfort. But such as have learned this way of laying their pained head and heart on his bosom, they are truly happy, though in the world's language they be never so miserable.

This is the resource of this holy man in the time of his affliction, whatever it was,—prayer and tears, bemoaning himself before his God and father, and that the more fervently, in that he finds his speaking to men so un-

* First published in the edition of the Expository Works, in two volumes, printed for David Wilson, Edinburgh, 1748.



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profitable; and therefore he refrains from it. The psalm consists of two parts, his silence to men, and his speech to God; and both of them are set with such sweet notes of music, though they be sad, that they deserve well to be committed *To the chief musician.*

*I said I will take heed to my ways.*] It was to himself that he said it; and it is impossible for any other to prove a good or a wise man, without much of this kind of speech to himself. It is one of the most excellent and distinguishing faculties of a reasonable creature; much beyond vocal speech, for in that, some birds may imitate us; but neither bird nor beast have anything of this kind of language, of reflecting or discoursing with itself. It is a wonderful brutality in the greatest part of men, who are so little conversant in this kind of speech, being framed and disposed for it, and which is not only of itself excellent, but of continual use and advantage; but it is a common evil among men, to go abroad, and out of themselves, which is a madness and a true distraction. It is true, a man hath need of a well-set mind, when he speaks to himself; for otherwise, he may be worse company to himself than if he were with others. But he ought to endeavor to have a better with him, to call in God to his heart to dwell with him. If thus we did, we should find how sweet this were to speak to ourselves, by now and then intermixing our speech with discourses unto God. For want of this, the most part not only lose their time in vanity, in their converse abroad with others, but do carry in heaps of that vanity to the stock which is in their own hearts, and do converse with that in secret, which is the greatest and deepest folly in the world.

Other solitary employments, as reading the disputes and controversies that are among men, are things not unuseful; yet, all turns to waste, if we read not our own heart, and study that. This is the study of every holy man, and between this and the consideration of God, he spends his hours and endeavors. Some have recommended the reading of men more than books; but what is in the one, or in both of them, or all the world beside, without this? A man shall find himself out of his proper business, if he acquaint not himself with this, to speak much with God and with himself, concerning the ordering of his own ways.

It is true, it is necessary for some men, in some particular charges and stations, to regard the ways of others; and besides something also there may be of a wise observing of others, to improve the good and the evil we see in them, to our own advantage, and the bettering of our own ways, looking on them to make the repercussion the stronger on ourselves; but except it be out of charity and wisdom, it flows either from uncharitable malice, or else a curious and vain spirit, to look much and narrowly into the ways of others, and to know the manner of living of persons about us, and so to know everything but ourselves: like travellers, that are well seen in foreign and remote parts, but strangers in the affairs of their own country at home. The check that Christ gave to Peter, is due to such, *What is that to thee? Follow thou me.* John xxi. 22. "Look thou to thine own feet, that they may be set in the right way." It is a strange thing, that men should lay out their diligence abroad to their loss, when their pains might be bestowed to their advantage nearer at hand, at home within themselves.

This that the psalmist here speaks of, *taking heed to his ways*, as it imports his present diligence, so, also, it hath in it reflection on his ways past, and these two do mutually assist one another. He shall never regulate his ways before him, who has not wisely considered his ways past; for there is wisdom gathered from the observation of what is gone, to the choosing where to walk in time to come, to see where he is weakest, and lies exposed to the greatest hazard, and there to guard. Thus David expresses it in another psalm, *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.* Psalm cxix. 52. And this should be done not only in the great change of one's first conversion from sin, but this double observance must be still continued every day: a man should be looking to his rule, and laying that rule to his way, and observing where the bulk and nonconformity to the rule is, and renewing his repentance for that, and amending it the next day, that still the present day may be the better for yesterday's error.

And surely there is much need of this, if we consider how we are encompassed about with hazards, and snares, and a variety of temptations, and how little we have either of strength to overcome, or of wisdom to avoid them, especially they being secretly set and unseen (which makes them the more dangerous), everywhere in the way in which we must walk, and even in those ways where we least think. Everywhere does the enemy of our souls lay traps and snares for us; in our table, in our bed, in our company, and alone. If the heart be earthly and carnal, there is the snare of riches and gains, or pleasures present, to think upon: and if it delight in spiritual things, that walk is not exempted either; there are snares of doubtings, presumption, and pride. And in the converse of one Christian with another, where spiritual affection hath been stirred, it turns often to carnal passions; as the apostle says of the Galatians, they *begin in the spirit* and *end in the flesh.* Gal. iii. 3.

This observing and watching, as it is needful, so it is a very delightful thing, though it will be hard and painful to the unexperienced. To have a man's actions and words continually curbed, so that he can not speak or do what he would,—these are fetters and

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bonds; yet, to those that know it, it is a pleasure to gain experience, and to be more skilled in preventing the surprises of our enemies, and upon that to have something added to our own art, and to be more able to resist upon new occasions, and to find ourselves every day outstripping ourselves. That is the sweetest life in the world, for the soul to be dressing itself for the espousals of the great King, putting on more of the ornaments and beauties of holiness. That is our glory, *to be made conformable to the image of God, and of Jesus Christ.* If an image had sense, it would desire nothing so much as to look on the original whence it received its name, and to become more and more like it: so it is the pleasure of renewed souls, to be looking on him, and to be growing daily more like him, whose living image they are, and to be fitting themselves for that day of glory wherein they shall be like him in the perfection they are capable of. And this makes death more pleasant than life to the believer: that which seems so bitter to the most of men, is sweetened to them most wonderfully. The continual observance of a man's ways, the keeping a watch continually over them, this casts a light upon the dark passage of death, which is at the end of that walk, and conveys him through to the fullness of life. So that the man who observes himself and his ways through life, hath little to do in examining them when he comes to die. It is a piece of strange folly, that we defer the whole, or a great part of our day's work, to the twilight of the evening, and are so cruel to ourselves, as to keep the great load of our life for a few hours or days, and for a pained, sickly body. He who makes it his daily work to observe his ways, is not astonished when that day comes, which long before was familiar to him every day.

*That I sin not with my tongue.*] It is the Wise man's advice, *Keep thy heart with all diligence*, or, *above all keeping;* and he gives the satisfying reason of it, *for out of it are the issues of life.* Prov. iv. 23. Such as the spring is, so will the streams be. The heart is the spring whence all the natural life and vital spirits flow through the body; and, in the Scripture sense, it is the spring of all our actions and conversation; for it sends out emissaries through all, through the eye, the hand, and all the senses and organs of the body, but through none more constantly and abundantly than the tongue; and therefore Solomon, after these words, immediately adds, *Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.* The current of the heart runs in that channel; for it is the organ of societies, and is commonly employed in all the converse of men. And we can still, when all the other members are useless, use our tongues in regretting their unfitness for their offices; as sick and old persons are wont to do. Thus David here, as it seems, under some bodily sickness, labors to refrain his tongue, and lest it should prove too strong for him, he puts a curb upon it though it did not free him from inward frettings of his heart, yet he lays a restraint upon his tongue, to stay the progress of sin, that grows in vigor by going out, and produces and begets sin of the same kind in the hearts and mouths of others, when it passes from the heart to the tongue. The Apostle James does amply and excellently teach the great importance of ordering the tongue in all a Christian's life. But we are ever learning, and never taught. We hear how excellent a guard this is to our lives, to keep a watch over our tongues; but, I fear, few of us gain the real advantage of this rule. We are far from the serious thoughts that a religious person had of this scripture, who, when he heard it read, withdrew himself for many years to the study of this precept, and made very good proficiency in it.

In all the disorders of the world, the tongue hath a great share. To let pass those irruptions of infernal furies, blasphemies and cursing, lying and uncharitable speeches, how much have we to account for unprofitable talking! It is a lamentable thing, that there is nothing, for the most part, in common entertainments and societies of men together, but refuse and trash; as if their tongues were given them for no other end than to be their shame, by discovering their folly and weakness! So likewise that of impatient speech in trouble and affliction, which certainly springs from an unmortified spirit, that hath learned nothing of that great lesson of submission to the will of God. But for all the disorders of the tongue, the remedy must begin at the heart. Purge the fountain, and then the streams will be clean. *Keep thy heart*, and then it will be easy to keep thy *tongue.* It is a great help in the quality of speech, to abate in the quantity; not to speak rashly, but to ponder what we are going to say. *Set a watch before the door of thy lips.* Psalm cxli. 3. He bids us not build it up like a stone wall, that nothing may go in or come out, but he speaks of a door, which may be sometimes open, oft-times shut, but withal, to have a watch standing before it continually. A Christian must labor to have his speech as contracted as can be, in the things of this earth; and even in divine things, our words should be few and wary. In speaking of the greatest things, it is a great point of wisdom not to speak much. That is David's resolution, to *keep silence*, especially *before the wicked*, who came to visit him, probably, when he was sick: while they were there, he *held a watch before his lips*, to speak nothing of God's hand on him, lest they should have mistaken him. And a man may have some thoughts of divine things, that it were very impertinent to speak out indifferently to all sorts even of good persons. This is a talkative age, and people contract a faculty to speak much in matters of religions, though

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their words for the most part be only the productions of their own brain; little of these things in their hearts. Surely, speeches of this kind are as bad as any, when holy things are spoken of with a notional freedom, where there is nothing but empty words. They who take themselves to solitude, choose the best and easiest part, if they have a warrant so to do; for this world is a tempestuous sea, in which there are many rocks, and a great difficulty it is to steer this little helm aright amidst them. However, the Apostle James makes it a great character of a Christian's perfection: *If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.* Jam. iii. 2. But where is that man? Seeing we find men generally, and most of all ourselves, so far from this, it can not choose but work this, to stir up ardent desires in us, to be removed to that blessed society where there shall be never a word amiss, nor a word too much.

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## LECTURE II.

VER. 2. I was dumb with silence; I held my peace even from good; and my sorrow was stirred.
VER. 3. My heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue.

IT is a very useful and profitable thing, to observe the motions and deportments of the spirits of wise and holy men, in all the various postures and conditions they are in. It is for that purpose they are drawn out to us in the Scriptures. There are some graces that are more proper, and come more in action, in times of ease and prosperity, such as temperance, moderation of mind, humility, and compassion. Others are more proper for times of distress, as faith, fortitude, patience, and resignation. It is very expedient, if not necessary, that affliction have its turns, and frequently, in the lives of the children of God; it is the tempest, that gives evidence of the pilot's skill. And as the Lord delighteth in all his works, looks on the frame and conduct of all things with pleasure, so he is delighted to look on this part, on this low sea of troubles, to see his champions meet with hard and pressing trials, such as sometimes do not only make them feel them, but do often make the conflict dubious to them, so that they seem to be almost foiled, yet do they acquit themselves, and come off with honor. It is not the excellency of grace, to be insensible in trouble (as some philosophers would have their wise men), but to overcome and be victorious.

Among the rest of this holy man's troubles, this was one, that the wicked did reproach him. This is a sharp arrow that flies thick in the world. It is one of the sharpest stings of poverty, that, as it is pinched with wants at home, so it is met with scorn abroad. It is reckoned among the sharp suffering, of holy men, Heb. xi. 36, that they suffered *bitter mockings.* Now, men commonly return these in the same kind, that is, by the tongue, whereof David is here aware. He refrains himself even *from good;* not only from his just defence, but even from good and pious discourses. We do so easily exceed in our words, that it is better sometimes to be wholly silent, than to speak that which is good: for our good borders so near upon evil, and so easy is the transition from the one to the other, that though we begin to speak of God and good things with a good intention, yet how quickly run we into another channel! Passion and self having stolen in, turn us quite from the first design of our speech. And this chiefly in disputes and debates about religion, wherein, though we begin with zeal for God, yet, oft-times in the end, we justify nothing but our own passion; and sometimes we do lie one against another in defence of what we call the truth.

It can not be denied, that to a holy heart, it is a great violence to be shut up altogether from the speech of God. It burns within, especially in the time of affliction, as was the case of Jeremiah: *Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name: but his word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and could not stay.* Jer. xx. 9. So is it here with David; therefore he breaks out: the fire burns upward, and he speaks to God.

Let this be our way, when we can not find ease among men, to seek it in God. He knows the language of his children, and will not mistake it; yea, where there may be somewhat of weakness and distemper, he will bear with it. In all your distresses, in all your moanings, go to him, pour out your tears to him. Not only fire, but even water, where it wants a vent, will break upward. These tears drop not in our own lap, but they fall on his, and he hath a bottle to put them in: if ye empty them there, they shall return in wine of strong consolation.

Ver. 4. Now David's request is, *Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.* In which he does not desire a response from God about the day of his death, but instruction concerning the frailty and shortness of his life. But did not David know this? Yes, he knew it, and yet he desires to know it. It is very fit we should ask of God that he would make us to know the things that we do know; I mean, that what we know emptily and barely, we may know spiritually and fruitfully, and if there be any measure of this knowledge, that it may increase and grow more. We know that we are sinners, but that knowledge commonly produces nothing but cold, dry, and senseless confusion: but the right knowledge of sin would prick our hearts, and cause us to pour them out before the Lord. We know that Jesus is the Savior

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of sinners; it were fit to pray that we might know more of him, so much of him as might make us shape and fashion our hearts to his likeness. We know we must die, and that it is no long course to the utmost period of *life*; yet our hearts are little instructed by this knowledge. How great need have we to pray this prayer with David here, or that with Moses, *Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.* Psalm xc. 12. Did we indeed know and consider how quickly we shall pass hence, it were not possible for us to cleave so fast to the things of this life, and, as foolish children, to wade in ditches, and fill our laps with mire and dirt; to prefer base earth and flesh to immortality and glory.

*That I may know how frail I am.*] Most part of men are foolish, inconsiderate creatures, *like unto the very beasts that perish*, Psalm xlix. 12, only they are capable of greater vanity and misery; but, in as irrational a way, they toil on and hurry themselves in a multitude of business, by multitudes of desires, fears, and hopes, and know not whither all tends. But one well-advised thought of this one thing, would temper them in their hottest pursuits, if they would but think how frail they are, how vain a passing thing, not only these their particular desires and projects are, but they themselves, and their whole life. David prays that he may *know his end*, and his prayer is answered; *Behold, thou hast made my days as a hand-breadth.* If we were more in requests of this kind, we should receive more speedy and certain answers. If this be our request, to know ourselves, our frailties and vanity, we shall know that our *days are few and evil*, know both the brevity and vanity of them.

Ver. 5. *Thou hast measured out my days as a hand-breadth.* That is one of the shortest measures. We need not long lines to measure our lives by: each one carries a measure about with him, his own hand; that is the longest and fullest measure. It is not so much as a span: that might possibly have been the measure of old age in the infancy of the world, but now it is contracted to a hand-breadth, and that is the longest. But how many fall short of that! Many attain not to a finger-breadth: multitudes pass from the womb to the grave; and how many end their course within the compass of childhood!

Whether we take this hand-breadth for the fourscore years that is ordinarily the utmost extent of man's life in our days, or the four periods of our age, in which we use to distinguish it, childhood, youth, manhood, and old age, there are great numbers we see take up their lodging ere they come near the last of any of these, and few attain to the outmost border of them. All of us are but a hand-breadth from death, and not so much; for many of us have passed a great part of that hand-breadth already, and we know not how little of it is behind. We use commonly to divide our lives by years, months, weeks, and days, but it is all but one day; there is the morning, noon, afternoon, and evening. *Man is as the grass that springs in the morning.* Psalm xc. 5. As for all the days that are passed of our life, death hath them rather than we, and they are already in its possession. When we look back on them, they appear but as a shadow or dream; and if they be so to us, how much more short are they in the sight of God! So says David here: When I look on thee and thy eternity, *mine age is as nothing before thee.* What is our life, being compared to God, before whom *a thousand years are but as one day!* And it is less—*like yesterday when it is past*, and that is but a thought! The whole duration of the world is but a point in respect to eternity; and how small a point is the life of man, even in comparison with that!

The brevity of our life is a very useful consideration. From it we may learn patience under all our crosses and troubles; they may be shorter than life, but they can be no longer. There are few whom an affliction hath lain on all the days of their life; but though that were the case, yet a little time, and how quickly is it done! While thou art asleep, there is a cessation of thy trouble; and when awake, bemoaning and weeping for it, and for sin that is the cause of it, in the mean time it is sliding away. In all the bitter blasts that blow on thy face, thou who art a Christian indeed, mayst comfort thyself in the thought of the good lodging that is before thee. To others, it were the greatest comfort, that their afflictions in this life were lengthened out to eternity.

Likewise, this may teach us temperance in those things that are called *the good things of this world.* Though a man had a lease of all the fine things the world can afford for his whole life (which yet never any man that I know of had), what is it? A feigned dream of an hour long. None of those things that it now takes so much delight it, will accompany the cold lump of clay to the grave. Within a little while, those that are married and rejoice, shall be *as if they rejoiced not*, 1 Cor. vii. 29, as if they never had done it; and since they shall be so quickly, a wise man makes little difference, in these things, between their presence and their absence.

This thought should also teach us diligence in our business. We have a short day, and much to do; it were fit to be up early; to *remember thy Creater in the days of thy youth.* And ye that are come to riper years, be advised to lay hold on what remains; ye know not how little it is.

The more you fill yourselves with the things of this life, the less desire you will have after *those rivers of pleasure that are at God's right hand.* These shall never run dry, but all those other things shall be dried up within a little space; at the furthest, when old age and death come, if not sooner. And on the other

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side, the more we deny ourselves the sensual enjoyments of the present world, we grow the liker to that Divine estate, and are made the surer of it. And I am sure, all will grant that this is a very gainful exchange.

*Verily, every man at his best estate is altogether vanity.*] It is no wonder that the generality of men are strangers to God, for they are strangers to themselves. The cure of both these evils is from the same hand. He alone can teach us what he is, and what we are ourselves. All know and see that their life is short, and themselves vanity; but this holy man thought it needful to ask the true notion of it from above, and he receives the measure of his life, *even a hand-breadth.* There is a common imposture among people, to read their fortunes by their hands; but this is true palmistry indeed, to read the shortness of our life upon the palms of our hands.

Our days are not only few, but we ourselves are *vanity. Every man,* even a godly man, as he is a partaker of this life, is not exempted from vanity: nay, he knows it better than any other; but this thought comforts him, that he hath begun that life which is above and beyond all vanity. The words are weighty and full. It is not a problem, or a doubtful thing, but, *surely, every man is vanity.* I may call it a definition, and so it is proved, Psalm cxliv. 2, 3: *What is man? He is like to vanity, and his days are as a shadow that passes away.* His days do not only soon decline and pass away as a shadow, but also they are *like vanity.* While he appears to be something, he is nothing but the figure and picture of vanity. He is like it, not the copy of it, but rather the original and idea of it, for he hath derived vanity to the whole creation: he hath *subjected the creatures* to it, and hath thrown such a load of it upon them, that they groan under it; and so, vanity agrees to him properly, constantly, and universally. *Every man,* and that *at his best estate,* or, as the word is, in his settled and fixed state. Set him as sure and as high as you will, yet he is not above that; he carried it about with him as he does his nature.

This is a very profitable truth to think on, though some kind of hearers, even of the better sort, would judge it more profitable to hear of cases of conscience. But this is a great case of conscience, to consider it well, and carry the impression of it home with you on your hearts—the extreme vanity of ourselves; that we are nothing but vanity. And the note that is added here, *Selah,* if it import port anything to the sense and confirmation of what it is added to, it agrees well to this; but if it be only a musical note, to direct, as some think, the elevation, or according to others, the falling of the voice, it fits the sense very well. For you have man here lifted up and cast down again: lifted up—*Man at his best estate,* and from that thrown down to nothing, even in that estate, *altogether vanity.* What is that? It is, as the word signifies, *an earthly vapor,* and it is generally used to signify things of the least and meanest use, the most empty, airy things. So idols are often called by that name: they are nothing in respect of what is attributed to them by the children of men. And such a thing is man: he seems to be something, and is, indeed, nothing: as it is Psalm lxii. 9: *Men of low degree are vanity*—possibly that may be granted for a truth, and they pass for such, but he adds—*Men of high degree are a lie:* they promise something, and look bigger like, but they are nothing more, except this, *a lie;* and the greater they are, the louder the lie.

This it is, then, that we should acquaint ourselves with: that man, in this present life, in all the high advantages of it, is an empty, feeble, fading thing. If we look to the frame of man's body, what is he but a muddy wall, *a house of clay, whose foundation is in the dust?* If we look within, there is nothing there but a sink and heap of filth. The body of man is not only subject to fevers, hectics, &c., that make the wall to moulder down, but take him in his health and strength, what is he but a bag of rottenness? And why should he take delight in his beauty, which is but the appearance of a thing, which a fit of sickness will so easily deface, or the running of a few years spoil the fashion of? A great heat or a cold puts that frame into disorder; a few days' sickness lays him in the dust, or much blood gathered within, gathers fevers and pleurisies, and so destroys that life it should maintain; or a fly or a crumb of bread may stop his breath, and so end his days.

If we consider men in societies, in cities and towns, often hath the overflowing scourge of famine and pestilence laid them waste; and from these they can not secure themselves in their greatest plenty and health, but they come on a sudden, and unlooked for. If we could see all the parts and persons in a great city at once, how many woes and miseries should we behold there! How many either want bread, or scarcely have it by hard labor! Then, to hear the groans of dying persons, and the sighs and weepings of those about them—how many of these things are within the walls of great cities at all times! Great palaces can not keep out death, but it breaks through and enters there, and thither, oft-times, the most painful and shameful diseases that are incident to the sons of men, resort. Death by vermin, hath seized on some of the greatest of kings that have ever been in the world. If we look on generals who have commanded the greatest armies, they carry about with them poor frail bodies as well as others; they may be killed with one small wound as well as the meanest soldier; and a few days' intemperance hath taken some of the most gallant and courageous of them away in the midst of their success. And, sure I am, he who believes and considers the life to come, and looks on this, and sees what it is, makes little account of those things that have so big

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a sound in the world: the revolutions of states, crowns, kingdoms, cities, towns, how poor, inconsiderable things are they, being compared with eternity! And he that looks not on them as such, is a *fool*.

## LECTURE III.

VER. 6. Surely every man walketh in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

THERE is a part of our hand-breadth past since we last left this place, and, as we are saying this, we are wearing out some portion of the rest of it. It were well if we considered this, so as to make a better improvement of what remains, than, I believe we shall find, upon examination of our ways, we have made of what is past. Let us see if we can gain the space of an hour, that we may be excited to a better management of the latter part of our time, than we have made of the former.

We are all, I think, convinced of the vanity of man, as to his outside, that he is a feeble, weak, poor creature; but we may have hope of somewhat better in that which is the man indeed, his mind and intellectual part. It is true, that that was originally excellent, and that there is somewhat of a radical excellency still in the soul of man; yet, it is so desperately degenerate, that, naturally, *man*, even in that consideration, *is altogether vanity*, in all the pieces of him: his mind is but a heap of vanity, nothing there but ignorance, folly, and disorder. And if we think not so, we are the more foolish and ignorant. That which passes with great pomp, under the title of *learning* and *science*, is commonly nothing else than a rhapsody of words and empty terms, which have nothing in them to make known the internal nature of things.

But even those persons who have the improvement of learning and education, who understand the model and government of affairs, who see their defects, and entertain themselves with various shapes of amending and reforming them, even in them we shall find nothing but a sadder and more serious vanity. It is a tormenting and vexing thing for men to promise to themselves great reformation and bettering of things. That thought usually deludes the wisest of men; they must at length come to that conclusion of Solomon, after much labor to little purpose, that *crooked things can not be made straight*, Eccles. i. 15. Yea, many things grow worse by laboring to rectify them; therefore he adds, verse 18, *And he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow.*

As for knowledge in religion, we see the greatest part of the world lying in gross darkness; and even among Christians, how much ignorance of these things: which appears in this, that there are such swarms and productions of debates and contentions, that they are grown past number. And each party is confident that truth is on his side; and ordinarily the most ignorant and erroneous are the most confident and most imperious in their determinations. Surely it were a great part of our wisdom to free our spirits from these empty fruitless janglings that abound in the Christian world.

It were an endless toil to go through all degrees, professions, and employments of men in the world; we may go through nations, countries, crafts, schools, colleges, courts, camps, councils of state, and parliaments, and find nothing in all these but still more of this trouble and vexation in a finer dress and fashion, *altogether vanity!*

*Every man walketh in a vain show.*] His walk is nothing but a going on in continual vanity, adding a new stock of vanity, of his own coining, to what he has already within, and vexation of spirit woven all along in with it. He walks in an image, as the word is; converses with things of no reality, and which have no solidity in them, and he himself has as little. He himself is a walking image, in the midst of these images. They who are taken with the conceit of images and pictures, that is an emblem of their own life, and of all other men's also. Every man's fancy is to himself a gallery of pictures, and there he walks up and down, and considers not how vain these are, and how vain a thing he himself is.

My brethren, they are happy persons (but few are they in number), who are truly weaned from all those images and fancies the world dotes so much upon. If many of the children of men would turn their own thoughts backward in the evening but of one day, what would they find for the most part, but that they have been walking among these pictures, and passing from one vanity to another, and back again to and fro, to as little purpose as the running up and down of children at their play! He who runs after honor, pleasure, popular esteem,—what do you think? Does not that man walk in an image, pursuing after that which hath no other being than what the opinion and fancy of men give to it?—especially the last, which is a thing so fluctuating, uncertain, and inconstant, that while he hath it, he hath nothing? The other image that man follows and worships, is that in the text, that wretched madness of *heaping up riches*. This is the great foolishness and disease especially of old age, that the less way a man has to go, he makes the greater provision for it. When the hands are stiff, and fit for no other labor, they are fitted and composed for scraping together. But for what end dost thou take all this pains? If for thyself, a little sober care will do thy turn, if thy desires be sober; and if not so, thy diligence were better bestowed in impairing and diminishing of these; that is the easier way a great deal. And if it be for others, why dost thou take a certain unease to thyself, for the uncertain ease of others? And

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who these are thou dost not know; may be, such as thou didst never intend them for. It were good we used more easy and undistracting diligence for the increasing of those treasures which we can not deny are far better, and whosoever hath them may abound therein with increase; he knows well for whom he gathers them; he himself shall possess them through all eternity.

If there were not a hope beyond this life, there were reason for that passionate word in Psalm lxxxix. 47: *Why hast thou made all men in vain?* To what purpose were it for poor wretched man to have been all his days tossed upon the waves of vanity, and then to lie down in the grave, and be no more heard of? But it is not so: he is made capable of a noble and blessed life beyond this; and our forgetfulness of this is the cause of all our misery and vanity here.

It is a great folly to complain of the shortness of our life, and yet to lavish it out so prodigally on trifles and shadows. If it were well managed, it would be sufficient for all we have to do. The only way to live indeed, is to be doing service to God and good to men: this is to live much in a little time. But when we play the fool in mispending our time, it may be indeed a sad thought to us, when we find it gone, and we are benighted in the dark so far from our home. But those that have their souls untied from this world and knit to God, they need not complain of the shortness of it, having laid hold on eternal life. For this life is flying away, there is no laying hold on it; and it is no matter how soon it go away; the sooner the better, for to such persons it seems rather to go too slow.

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## LECTURE IV.

**VER. 7. And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee.**

To entertain the minds of men with thoughts of their own vanity, and discourses of their own misery, seems to be sad and unpleasant; but certainly it is not unprofitable, unless it be our own choice to make it so, and that were the greatest vanity and misery of all. Indeed, if there were no help for this *sore evil*, then the common shift were not to be blamed, yea, it were to be chosen as the only help in such a desperate case, not to think on it, to forget our misery, and to divert our thoughts from it by all possible means, rather than to increase it, and torment ourselves by insisting and poring on it; and in that case shallow minds would have the advantage, that could not converse with these sad thoughts, for to *increase this knowledge* were but *to increase sorrow*. But far be it from us thus to determine: there is a hope which is a help to this evil, and this is what this holy man fixes on: *And now, Lord, my hope is in thee.* Otherwise, it were strange that the most excellent piece of the visible creation should be made subject to the most incurable unhappiness; to feel misery which he can not shun, and to be tormented with desires that can not be satisfied. But there is some better expectation for the souls of men, and it is no other than HIMSELF who made them.

The wisest natural men have discoursed of man's vanity, and passionately bemoaned it; but in this they have fallen short, how to remedy it. They have aimed at it, and come near it, but have not been able to work it they still labored to be satisfied in themselves. They speak somewhat of reason, but that will not do it; for man being fallen under the curse of God, there is nothing but darkness and folly in himself. The only way to blessedness is by going out of ourselves unto God.

All our discourses of our own vanity will but further disquiet us, if they do not terminate here, if they do not fix on his eternal happiness, goodness, and verity.

I am persuaded, if many would ask this question of themselves, *What wait I for?* they would puzzle themselves and not find an answer. There are a great many things that men desire and are gaping after, but few seek after one thing chiefly and stayedly: they float up and down, and are carried about without any certain motion, but by fancy and by guess; and no wind can be fair for such persons, who aim at no certain haven.

If we put this question to ourselves, What would I have? it were easy for many to answer—I would have an easy, quiet, peaceable life in this world. So would an ox or a horse. And is that all? May be you would have a greater height of pleasure and honor. But think on this one thing: there is this one crack and vanity that spoils all these things, that they will not bear you up when you lean to them in times of distress; and besides, when you have them they may be pulled from you, and if not, you must be plucked away from them within a little while. There is much seeming content in the pursuit of these things, but they are lost with greater discontent. It is God's goodness to men, to blast all things in the world to them, and to break their fairest hopes, that they may be constrained to look above to himself: he beats them from all shores, that he may *bring them to the Rock that is higher than they.* Psalm lxi. 2.

Oh, that God would once touch some of your hearts, who are under the *chains of darkness*, that ye might once bethink where to rest your heads in the midst of all our confusions. And here is the resting-place; *hope in God. Now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee.* Blessed soul that can say, "Lord, thou seest I desire nothing but thyself (as Peter said, *Lord, thou knowest I love thee*); all the corners of my heart stand open in thy sight; thou seest if there be any other desire or expectation but to please thee; and if there be any such thing in me (for I see i

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not), I pray thee discover it to me, and through thy grace it shall lodge no longer. My heart is thine alone, it is consecrated to thee: and if anything would profane thy temple, if it will not go forth by fair warning, let it be scourged out by thy rod, yea by any rod whatsoever it pleaseth thee to choose."

*My hope is in thee.*] This holy man, seeing the vanity of all other expectations and pursuits of men, at length runs to this: *And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee.* He finds nothing but moving sand everywhere else; but he finds this Eternal Rock to be a strong foundation, as the Hebrew word by which he is styled doth signify. It is true, the union of the heart with God is made up by faith and love; but yet both these, in this our present condition of absence and distance from God, do act themselves much by the third grace which is joined with them, and that is *hope*. For faith is conversant about *things that are not seen*, and in a great part, that *are not* as yet, but are to come; and the spirit of faith, choosing things that are to come, is called hope. It is true they are not so wholly deferred, as that they possess nothing: but yet the utmost they possess is but a pledge and earnest-penny, a small thing in respect of that eternal inheritance they look for. What they have here is of the same kind with what they expect, but it is but a little portion of it; the smiles and glances of their Father's face, foretastes of heaven, which their souls are refreshed with. But these are but rare, and for a short time.

Hope is the great stock of believers: it is that which upholds them under all the faintings and sorrows of their mind in this life, and in their going *through the valley and shadow of death*. It is the *helmet of their salvation*, which, while they are looking over to eternity, beyond this present time, covers and keeps their head safe amid all the darts that fly round about them. In the present discomfort and darkness of mind, and the saddest hours they meet with in this life, hope is that which keeps up the soul; and it is that which David cheered up his soul with, Psalm xlii. 5. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.* And even in this point the *children of the world* have no great advantage of the *children of God*, as to the things of this life; for much of their satisfaction, such as it is, doth hang, for the most part, on their hope; the happiest and richest of them do still piece it out with some further expectation, something they look for beyond what they have, and the expectation of that pleases them more than all their present possessions. But this great disadvantage they have, that all their hopes are but heaps of delusions and lies, and either they die and obtain them not, or if they do obtain them, yet they obtain them not; they are so far short of what they fancied and imagined of them beforehand. But the hope of the children of God, as it is without fail sure, so it is inconceivably full and satisfying, far beyond what the largest apprehension of any man is able to reach. *Hope in God!* What is wanting there?

This hope lodges only in the pure heart: it is a precious liquor that can be kept only in a clean vessel, and that which is not so can not receive it, but what it seems to receive it corrupts and destroys. It is a confidence arising from peace, agreement, and friendship, which can not subsist between the God of purity and those who allow unholiness in themselves. It is a strange impudence for men to talk of their trust and hope in God, who are in perfect hostility against him. Bold fellows go through dangers here, but it will not be so hereafter. Jer. ii. 27. *They turn to me the back, and not the face; yet, in their trouble, they say, Arise and save us:* they do it as confidently as if they never had despised God, but they mistake the matter; it is not so. *Go and cry*, says he, *to the gods whom ye have chosen.* Judg. x. 14. When men come to die, then they catch hold of the mercy of God; but from that their filthy hands are beat off, there is no help for them there, and so they fall down to the pit. A holy fear of God, and a happy hope in him, are commonly linked together. *Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.* Psalm xxxiii. 19.

And even in those who are more purified from sin, yet too large draughts of lawful pleasures do clog the spirits, and make this hope grow exceedingly weak. Surely the more we fill ourselves with these things, we leave the less appetite for the consolations of this blessed hope. They can not know the excellency of this hope, who labor not to keep it unmixed: it is best alone, as the richest wines and oils, which are the worst of mixtures. *Be sober and hope*, says the apostle Peter, 1 Epistle i. 13: keep your mind sober, and your hope shall be pure. If any thing or person leans on two supporters, whereof the one is whole and sound, and the other broken or crooked, that which is unsound will break, though the other remain whole, and that which was propped up by it will fall; whereas the one that was whole had been sufficient: thus it is when we divide our hopes between God and this present world, or any other good. Those who place their whole hopes on God, they gather in all their desires to him; the streams of their affections are not scattered and left in the muddy ditches of the world, they do not fall into stinking pools, but being gathered into one main torrent, they run on in that channel to the sea of his eternal goodness.

*My hope is in thee.*] We can not choose but all of us think that God is immensely good in himself; but that which is nearer, whereon our hearts most rise, is a relative goodness,



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that he is good *to us*, and that he is so perfectly and completely good, that having made choice of him, and obtained union with him, we need no more. Were once the hearts of the children of men persuaded of this, all their deliberations were at an end: they would not only choose no other, but defer no longer to fix on him. And what can trouble the soul that is thus established? Nor change or overturning of outward things. Though the frame of the world itself were shaken to pieces, yet still the bottom of this hope is upon him who *changeth not*. And whatever the pressures be, whether poverty, sickness, or disquiet of mind, thou mayest draw abundant consolation from him in whom thou hast placed thy hope. There is only one thing that cruelly assaults it by the way, and that is the guilt of sin. All afflictions and troubles we meet with are not able to mar this hope or quench it, for where it is strong, it either breaks through them or flies above them: they can not overcome it, for there is no affliction inconsistent with the love of God; yea, the sharpest affliction may sometimes have the clearest characters of his love upon it. But it is sin that presents him as angry to the view of the soul. When he looks through that cloud, he seems to be an enemy; and when we apprehend him in that aspect, we are affrighted, and presently apprehend a storm. But even in this case, this hope apprehends his mercy. And thus David here.

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## LECTURE V.

**Ver. 8. Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish.**

This is indeed the basis and foundation of all our other hopes, the free pardon of our sins. But none must entertain those sins, if they desire to be pardoned. *Repentance* and *remission of sins* are still linked together in the Scriptures; and he that would have sin pardoned, and yet live in it, or retain the love of it, would have God and sin reconciled together, and that can never be. David finds his sins pressing him down; he sees them as an army of men set in battle array about him; and whither flies he for deliverance? Even to him whom he had offended.

Ver. 9, 10. *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it. Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thy hand.*] We are naturally very partial judges of ourselves; and, as if we were not sufficiently able by nature, we study and devise by art to deceive ourselves. We are ready to reckon any good that is in us to the full, nay, to multiply it beyond what it is; and further to help this, we use commonly to look on those who have less goodness in them, who are weaker, more foolish, and worse than ourselves; and so we magnify the sense of our own worth and goodness by that comparison. And as in the goodness we have, or imagine we have, so likewise in the evils we suffer, we use to extol them very much in conceit. We account our lightest afflictions very great; and to heighten our thoughts of them, we do readily take a view of those who are more at ease and less afflicted than ourselves; and by these devices we nourish in ourselves pride, by the overweening conceit of our goodness, and impatience, by the overfeeling sense of our evils. But if we would help ourselves by comparison, we should do well to view those persons who are, or have been, eminent for holiness, recorded in Holy Writ, or whom we know in our own times, or have heard of in former times; and by this means, we should lessen the great opinion we have of our own worth. And so likewise should we consider the many instances of great calamities and sorrows, which would tend to quiet our minds, and enable us to *possess our souls in patience*, under the little burden of trials that lies upon us. And, especially, we shall find those instances to fall in together, that as persons have been very eminent in holiness, they have also been eminent in suffering very sore strokes and sharp scourges from the hand of God. If we would think on their consuming blows and broken bones, their *bones burnt as a hearth*, and their *flesh withered as grass*, certainly we should entertain our thoughts sometimes with wonder at God's indulgence to us, that we are so little afflicted, when so many of the children of men, and so many of the children of God, suffer so many and so hard things; and this would very much add to the stock of our praises. We should not think that we are more innocent in not deserving those things that are inflicted on others, but rather, that he who thus measures out to them and to us, knows our size, and sees how weak we are in comparison of them; and that therefore he is indulgent to us, not because we are better, but because we are weaker, and are not able to bear so much as he lays on the stronger shoulders. Even in the sharpest of these rods there is mercy. It is a privilege to the sheep that is ready to wander, to be beaten into the right way. When thou art corrected, think that thereby thy sins are to be purged out, thy passions and lusts to be crucified by these pains; and certainly, he that finds any cure of the evils of his spirit by the hardest sufferings of his flesh, gets a very gainful bargain. If thou account sin thy greatest unhappiness and mischief, thou wilt be glad to have it removed on any terms. There is at least in the time of affliction, a cessation from some sins; the raging lust of ambition and pride doth cease, when a man is laid upon his back; and these very cessations are some advantages. But there is one great benefit of affliction which follows in the text, that it gives him the true measure of himself.

Ver. 11. *When with rebukes thou dost cor-*

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*rect man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity,* Selah.] *Man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity:* but at its lowest estate, it appears best unto him, how much vanity he is, and how much vanity he was at his best estate, seeing he was then capable of such a change, to fall so low from such a height. As that great man who was seeking new conquests, when he fell upon the sand, and saw the print of his own body, "Why," says he, "so small a parcel of earth will serve me, who am seeking after new kingdoms!"—thus it is, when a man is brought down, then he hath the right measure of himself, when he sees how vain a thing he is.

Thus the psalmist represents it here both as an argument to move God to compassion, and to instruct himself and other men. So Job xiii. 25: *Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro with the wind? and wilt thou pursue dry stubble?* And Psalm ciii. 14: *For he knoweth our frame: he remembereth that we are dust.* And his beauty, which seemed to be his perfection, yet, when the hand of God is on him, it is blasted as a moth-eaten garment. This should teach us humility, and to beware of sin, which provokes God to pour out his heavy judgments upon us. If any be proud of honor, let him remember Nebuchadnezzar and Herod—or if proud of riches, or of wit and endowments of mind, let him think how soon God can make all these to wither and melt away. *Surely, every man is vanity.*

Ver. 12. *Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears; for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.*] What is this life we cleave so fast to, and are so uneasy to hear at parting with, what is it but a trance, and a succession of sorrows, a weary tossing and tottering upon the waves of vanity and misery? No estate or course of life is exempted from the causes of this complaint: the poorer and meaner sort are troubled with wants, and the richer with the care of what they have, and sometimes with the loss of it; and the middle sort between the two, they partake, in common, of the vexations of both, for their life is spent in care for keeping what they have, and in turmoil for purchasing more; beside a world of miseries and evils that are incident equally to all sorts of men, such as sickness and pain of body, which is both a sharp affliction, and sits close to a man, and which he is least able, either by strength of mind, or by any art or rule, to bear; and this guest does as often haunt palaces as poor cottages; there are as many groans of sick and diseased bodies within silken curtains, as in the meanest lodging. Neither does godliness exempt the best of men from the sufferings of this life. David, who was both a great man and a good man, did share deeply in these, so that his conclusion still holds truth; no instance can be found to infringe it: *Surely every man is altogether vanity.*

It remains only to inquire, what manner of men they are who are furnished with the best helps, and with the most comfortable mitigations of their trouble, and with the strongest additions of support and strength to bear them up under it. And it will certainly be found that godliness alone hath this advantage. And among the many consolations godly men have under their troubles, this is one, and the chief one, their recourse unto prayer. So here, and Psalm cxlii. 4, 5. So Isa. xxxviii. 2: *Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall:* he turns his back on all worldly counsels and vain helps, and betakes himself to prayer; and prayer brings ease, and support, and seasonable deliverance, to the godly man. But *their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after other gods;* Psalm xvi. 4; and this all ungodly men do when they are afflicted: they run to other imaginary helps of their own, and those prove but the multipliers of sorrows, and add to their torment; they are *miserable* or troublesome *comforters*, like unskilful physicians, who add to the patient's pain, by nauseous, ill-chosen, and, it may be, pernicious drugs.

Now, in this prayer of David, we find three things, which are the chief qualifications of all acceptable prayers. The first is *humility.* He humbly confesses his sins, and his own weakness and worthlessness. We are not to put on a stoical, flinty kind of spirit under our afflictions, that so we may seem to shun womanish repinings and complaints, lest we run into the other evil, of *despising the hand of God*, but we are to humble our proud hearts, and break our unruly passions. There is something of this in the nature of affliction itself: as in the daytime men are abroad, but the night draws them home, so in the day of prosperity, men run out after vanities and pleasures, and when the dark night of affliction comes, then men should come home, and wisely lay the matter to heart. It is meet we *humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.* It is meet to say unto him, as Job xxxiv. 31, *I have been chastised*, or *have borne chastisement, and I will not offend any more.* That is a kind of language that makes the rod fall out of his hand. That prayer ascends highest which comes from the lowest depth of an humbled heart. But God *resists the proud;* he proclaims himself an enemy to pride and stiffness of spirit; but his grace seeks the humble heart, as water does the low ground.

If a holy heart be the *temple of God*, and therefore a *house of prayer*, certainly, when it is framed and builded for such, the foundation of that temple is laid in deep humility; otherwise, no prayers that are offered up in it have the smell of pleasing incense to him.

The second qualification of this prayer is *fervency* and *importunity*, which appears in the elegant gradation of the words: *Hear my prayer*, my words; if not that, yet, *Give ear to my cry*, which is louder; and if that pre-

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vail not, yet, *Hold not thy peace at my tears*, which is the loudest of all; so David, elsewhere, calls it *the voice of his weeping*. Though this gift of tears doth often flow from the natural temper, yet where that temper becomes spiritual and religious, it proves a singular instrument of repentance and prayer. But yet there may be a very great height of piety and godly affections where tears are wanting; yea, this defect may proceed from a singular sublimity of religion in their souls, being acted more in the upper region of the intellectual mind, and so not communicating much with the lower affections, or these expressions of them. We are not to judge of our spiritual proficiency by the *gift of prayer*, for the heart may be very spiritually affected, where there is no readiness or volubility of words. The sure measure of our growth is to be had from our holiness, which stands in this, to see how our hearts are crucified to the world, and how we are possessed with the love of God, and with ardent longings after union with him, and dwelling in his presence hereafter, and in being conformed to his will here.

It is the greatest folly imaginable in some to shed tears for their sins, and within a little while to return to them again; they think there is some kind of absolution in this way of easy venting themselves by tears in prayer, and when a new temptation returns, they easily yield to it. This is lightness and foolishness, like the inconstancy of a woman who entertains new lovers in her mourning apparel, having expressed much sorrow and grief for her former husband.

Now, fervency in prayer hath in it, 1*st*, Attentiveness of mind. If the mind be not present, it is impossible that much of the heart and affections can be there. How shall we think that God will hear those prayers which we do not hear ourselves? And shall we think them worthy of his acceptance, that are not worthy of our thoughts? Yet we should not leave off prayer because of the wanderings of our hearts in it, for that is the very design of the devil, but still we must continue in it, and amend this fault as much as we can; by remembering, in the entry, with whom we have to do, by freeing our minds as much as may be from the entanglements and multiplicity of business, and by laboring to have our thoughts often in heaven. For where the heart is much, it will be ever and anon turning thitherward, without any difficulty.

2*dly*, Fervency of prayer hath in it an intense bent of the affections: to have our desires as ardent as can be for the pardon of sin, for the mortifying of our lusts and passions, for the delivering us from the love of ourselves and this present world; and for such spiritual things to pray often, and to follow it with importunity. That is to pray fervently, never to rest till an answer come.

The third qualification is *faith*. *He who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of all that diligently seek him.* Heb. xi. 6. And certainly, as he that comes to God must believe this, so he that believes this, can not but come to God: and if he be not presently answered, *he that believes makes no haste*—he resolves patiently to wait for the Lord, and to go to no other.

Surely, there is much to be had in prayer. All good may be obtained, and all evil averted by it; yea, it is a reward to itself. It is the greatest dignity of the creature, to be admitted to converse with God. And certainly, the soul that is much in prayer, grows in purity, and is raised by prayer to the despising of all those things that the world admires and is in love with, and by a wonderful way is conformed to the likeness of God.

*For I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.*] In the law, God recommends strangers to the care and compassion of his people; now David returns the argument to him, persuade him to deal kindly with him: "*For I am a stranger with thee*, that is, *before thee*—in this world wherein thou hast appointed me to sojourn a few days. And I betake myself to thy protection in this strange country; I seek shelter under the shadow of thy wings; therefore, have compassion upon me." He that looks on himself as a stranger, and is sensible of the darkness both round about him in this wilderness, and also within him, will often put up that request with David, Psalm cxix. 19, *I am a stranger on this earth; hide not thy commandments from me*—do not let me lose my way. And as we should use this argument to persuade God to look down upon us, so likewise, to persuade ourselves to send up our hearts and desires to him. What is the joy of our life, but the thoughts of that other life, our home, before us? And, certainly, he that lives much in these thoughts, set him where you will here, he is not much pleased or displeased; but if his Father call him home, that word gives him his heart's desire.

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## LECTURE VI.

**Ver. 13. O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.**

Why is it that we do not extremely hate that which we so desperately love, sin? For the deformity of itself is unspeakable: and, besides, it is the cause of all our woes. Sin hath opened the sluices, and lets in all the deluge of sorrows which makes the life of poor man nothing else than vanity and misery, so that the meanest orator in the world may be eloquent enough on that subject. What is our life, but a continual succession of many deaths? Though we should say nothing of all the bitterness and vexa

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tions that are hatched under the sweetest pleasures in the world, this one thing is enough, the multitude of diseases and pains, the variety of distempers, that those houses we are lodged in are exposed to. Poor creatures are oft-times tossed between two, the fear of death, and the tediousness of life; and under these fears they can not tell which to choose. Holy men are not exempted from some apprehensions of God's displeasure because of their sins; and that may make them cry out with David, *O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.* Or, perhaps, this may be a desire, not so much simply for the prolonging of life, as for the intermitting of his pain, to have ease from the present smart. The extreme torment of some sickness, may draw the most fixed and confident spirits to cry out very earnestly for a little breathing. Or rather, if the words imply the desire of a recovery, and the spinning out of the thread of his life a little longer, surely he intended to employ it for God and his service. But long *life* was suitable to the promises of that time: so Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 5. There is no doubt those holy men under the law, knew somewhat of the state of immortality; their calling themselves *strangers on earth* (Heb. xi. 13), argued that they were no strangers to these thoughts. But it can not be denied, that that doctrine was but darkly laid out in those times. It is Christ Jesus who *hath brought life and immortality to light*, who did illuminate life and immortality, which before stood in the dark.

Surely, the desire of life is, for the most part, sensual and base, when men desire that they may still enjoy their animal pleasures, and are loath to be parted from them. They are pleased to term it, a desire to live and repent; and yet few do it when they are spared: like evil debtors, who desire forbearance from one term to another; but with no design at all to pay. But there is a natural desire of life, something of abhorrence in nature against the dissolution of these tabernacles. We are loath to go forth, like children who are afraid to walk in the dark, not knowing what may be there. In some, such a desire of life may be very reasonable; being surprised by sickness, and apprehensions of death, and sin unpardoned, they may desire a little time before they enter into eternity. For that change is not a thing to be hazarded upon a few days or hours' preparation. I will not say that death-bed repentance is altogether desperate, but certainly it is very dangerous, and to be suspected; and, therefore, the desire of a little time longer, in such a case, may be very allowable.

I will not deny but it is possible, even for a believer, to be taken in such a posture, that it may be very uncomfortable to him to be carried off so, through the affrightments of death, and his darkness as to his after-state. On the other hand, it is an argument of a good measure of spirituality and height of the love of God, *to desire to depart, and be dissolved*, in the midst of health, and the affluence of worldly comforts. But for men to desire and wish to be dead, when they are troubled and vexed with anything, is but a childish folly, flowing from a discontented mind, which being over, they desire nothing less than to die. It is true there may be a natural desire of death, which at sometimes hath shined in the spirits of some natural men: and there is much reason for it, not only to be freed from the evils and troubles of this life, but even from those things which many of this foolish world account their happiness—sensual pleasures, to eat and drink, and to be hungry again, and still to round that same course which, to souls that are raised above sensual things, is burdensome and grievous.

But there is a spiritual desire of death, which is very becoming a Christian. For Jesus Christ hath not only opened very clearly the doctrine of eternal life, but he himself hath passed through death, and lain down in the grave; he hath perfumed that passage, and warmed that bed for us; so that it is sweet and amiable for a Christian to pass through and follow him, and to be where he is. It is a strange thing, that the souls of Christians have not a continual desire to go to that company which is above (finding so much discord and disagreement among the best of men that are here); to go to *the spirits of just men made perfect*, where there is light, and love, and nothing else; to go to the *company of angels*, a higher rank of blessed spirits; but, most of all, to go *to God, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Testament.* And, to say nothing positively of that glory (for the truth is, we can say nothing of it), the very evils that death delivers the true Christian from, may make him long for it; for such a one may say—I shall die, and go to a more excellent country, where I shall be happy for ever: that is, I shall die no more, I shall sorrow no more, I shall be sick no more, and, which is yet more considerable, I shall doubt no more, and shall be tempted no more; and, which is the chiefest of all, I shall sin no more.

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# EXPOSITORY LECTURES ON ISAIAH VI.

## LECTURE I.

### VER. 1—5.

THE division of this chapter (were that to any great purpose) may be stated thus:—

1. The prophet's vision, from ver. 1 to 3. *In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. 2. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 3. And one cried unto another, and said, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.*

II. The effects of it upon him, relating to this calling, rom ver. 4–13. *And the posts of the door moved at the voice of them that cried, and the house was filled with smoke*, &c.

In the vision, besides the circumstances of time and place specified, ver. 1, we have a glorious representation of the majesty of God, ver. 2: a suitable acclamation, a voice of praise being joined with it, ver. 3, 4.

The effects of it on the prophet toward his calling are three, viz., I. his preparation. II. his mission. III. his message.

I. The preparation, in these two particulars: 1. humiliation; 2. purification (ver. 6, 7): a deep conviction, and then, effectual removal of pollution.

II. In his mission we have three things: 1. God's inquiry for a messenger, ver. 8, former part. 2. The prophet's offer of himself, the latter part of ver. 8. 3. God's acceptance, ver. 9, former part.

III. His message—a heavy commination, from ver. 9–12, yet, allayed with a gracious mitigation, ver. 13; the judgment very lasting and wasting, yet a remnant reserved.

VER. 1. In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

*I saw.*] Observe the freedom of God in his choice of men to be near him and know him. And in the measuring out of the degrees of discovery unto those men differently, some had extraordinary revelations; and though prophetic visions now cease, yet there are certainly higher and clearer coruscations of God upon some souls, than upon many others, who yet are children of light, and partake of a measure of that light shining within them. Thus we are not carvers and choosers, and, therefore, are not peremptorily to desire anything in kind or measure that is singular; that were pride and folly. But above all things we are to esteem, and submissively to desire, still more and more knowledge of God, and humbly to wait and keep open the passage of light; not to close the windows, not to be indulgent to any known sin or impure affection; that will soon obstruct it. Into a filthy soul, wisdom will not enter.

*In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord on his throne.*] There is another king named here, to denote the time by; but he was a diseased and a dying king, who lived some years a leper, and then died. Men may speak in a court style of vain wishes, *O king, live for ever;* but this king here on the throne, is indeed THE KING IMMORTAL, the ever-living God.

God measures and proportions all his means to their ends. When he calls men to high services, he furnishes them with suitable preparations and enablements. Thus here with the prophet: he was to denounce heavy things against his own nation, *a proud, stubborn people;* to deal boldly and freely with the highest, yea, with the king himself, ch. vii.; and he is prepared by a *vision of God.* What can a man fear after that? All regal majesty and pomp looks petty and poor after that sight. Two kings together on their thrones in robes royal (1 Kings xxii.) did no whit astonish him who had seen a greater: *I saw* (says Micaiah) *the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the hosts of heaven standing by.* Much like this is the vision of Isaiah here before us.

Eyes dazzled with the sun, see not the glittering of drops of dew on the earth; and those are quickly gone, with all their faint and fading glory, to a soul taken with the contemplation of God. How meanly do they spend their days, who bestow them on counting money, or courting little earthly idols in ambition or love! From how high a stand doth he look down on those, who looks on God, and admires his greatness, wonders at what he sees, and still seeks after more! These two are therefore joined together, *beholding the beauty of the Lord*, and *inquiring in his temple.* Psalm xxvii. 4. *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.*

Ver. 2, 3. *Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full*

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*of his glory.*] These glorious courtiers, flaming spirits, are light and love, whose very feet are too bright for us, as his face is too bright for them; and they cry *holy, holy, holy*—thrice holy, most holy THREE, one God—*Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.* This they cry one to another, echoing it and returning it incessantly. They that praise him most, come nearest their life. When we are to pray, or offer any worship to the great God in the sanctuary, especially in solemn worship there, let us think of him as thus on his throne above, and the diffusion of his glory there, of his train filling the upper temple, and so stoop low and fall down before him. *Holy, holy, holy.* This is the main thing wherein he is glorious, and we are to know and adore him in this view, and abhor ourselves as in his sight.

*The whole earth.*] So many creatures and various works and affairs, fruits and plants, and rich commodities, and so many calamities and miseries that kingdoms and people are afflicted with as by turns, and so many disorders, and such wickedness of men in public and private matters; and yet, in all these varieties and contrarieties of things, this one is the sum of all, and all is taken up in it, *The whole earth is full of his glory.* In framing and upholding, in ruling and ordering all, what a depth of power and wisdom.

VER. 4. The posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

How true must that be, that at his voice *the earth quakes* and *the mountains tremble*, when, at the voice of an angel crying or proclaiming his name, the very threshold of the temple (the then holiest part of the earth) moves! This, in the vision, was intended to represent the dreadfulness of his great name, which vile men dare baffle in vain oaths, and can speak thereof without sense: but hearts that are indeed his *living temples* will find this emotion: when his name is proclaimed, or when they mention or think of it, *the posts will be moved* with an awful trembling.

*And the house was filled with smoke.*] This was here a symbol of the presence and majesty of God. See Psalm xcvii. 2. *Clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne;* not a signal of displeasure, as some take it. *He dwells in light that is inaccessible*, and round about is *thick darkness*, shutting out the weak eyes of men, which were not able to abide the brightness of his glory. Much of our knowledge here, lies in this, to know that we know him not: and much of our praise, to confess that we can not praise him—*silentium tibi laus*, as they read Ps. lxv. 1.

VER. 5. Then said I, Wo is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.

*Then said I, Wo is me.*] He is not lifted up with the dignity, that he should be honored with such a vision of God; but on the contrary, is struck with humble, holy fear: Oh, *I am undone!* This constitutes much of the exercise of souls admitted nearest to God, even this astonishment and admiration that such as they should be regarded and raised to that height, and holy fear in a sense of their unholiness. When the blessed Virgin heard a voice very much to her own advantage (Luke i. 28, 29), instead of rising in her own conceit upon it, *she was troubled, and marvelled what manner of salutation it should be*, and was struck with fear, so that the angel found it needful to say, *Fear not.*

Illusions and deceits of spirit of this kind, can not be better distinguished from true manifestations of God, than by this, that they breed pride and presumption in the heart, make it vain and haughty; while true senses, and joys, and discoveries of love, in what kind soever, do most powerfully humble. *Is est, qui superbire non potest, cui Deus ostendit misericordiam suam.* Augustine.

*For mine eyes have seen the King, the* LORD *of Hosts.*] The mother and nurse of pride, is ignorance of God. A small glance of him will make the best of men abhor themselves, and still the nearer sight of him, the lower conceit will there be of self, and the deeper sense of impurity and vileness. This tells us, though we hear and speak of God, alas! we know him not.

*I am a man of polluted lips.*] He mentions this the rather because he heard that song which he would have joined with, but durst not, because of *polluted lips.* Thus we must confess we are polluted all over, but much of our pollution breaks out by the lips, yet, commonly, we think not on it.

*I am undone.*] We could not indeed bear much, could not see God and live; therefore he veils himself. But surely we might see much more than we do, and live the better for it, the more humbly and holily. Our pollutions hinder and unfit us, as he implies when he says, *A man of polluted lips.* But oh, that we saw so much of him as to see this pollution, which makes us so unworthy and so unfit to see him.

He first cries, *I am a man of unclean lips*, and then adds, *I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.* This is the true method; there can be no right sense of pollutions about us, but that which begins with a sense of those within us. Few men reflect much on themselves; or, if they do, they view themselves by a false light.

*Polluted lips.*] This he says in regard of the voice he heard. And with regard to the much irreverence with which we mention God, both ministers and people, as much of all our heart pollutions have their vent this way, so the promise of sanctifying his people runs much on this. Zeph. iii. 9. They of a *pure lip* shall offer. All are of the holy order, a *royal priesthood*, and through sancti-

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fied lips, as the censor, still they offer incense of prayer and praise. *He is a perfect man that offends not in word.* Jam. iii. 2. Commonly, by much speaking, there is much pollution: *In many words there wants not sin.* Prov. x. 19. Therefore *let your speech be always seasoned with salt.* Col. iv. 6. Now, many speeches need much salt, otherwise some part will be rotten, at least unsavory. Much of the sin of the land consists in this: there are few companies where God is not dishonored and provoked by your communication; and till this be laid to heart, judgments will multiply and grow instead of decreasing. Few, even of those who *fear the Lord, speak often one to another*, in a strain that God delights, not only to hearken to, but to write down and register for their good.

*And I dwell amidst a people of unclean lips.*] We infect each other when we meet. There is little converse that a man returns the better by, yea, by the most he is the worse: he brings back often more pollution, more folly and vanity by most companies and discourses. But we see here, that impurity humbly acknowledged, is graciously removed.

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## LECTURE II.

### Ver. 6—8.

VER. 6. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs off the altar.

IMPURITY well discovered to a man, is half cured. Whensoever God graciously shows a man his own unsanctifiedness, there he goes on to cleanse and sanctify him: the light that discovers, is followed by a *burning coal* that purges away.

The Holy Spirit is that purifying fire: a touch of it cleanseth the hearts, and lips, and all, and kindles that affection in the soul which can not die out, which not many, which no *waters can quench again.* It doth this to all that are sanctified, but eminently it doth it (or, at least, they desire it may) to to those who are to be the instruments of enlightening, purifying, and kindling others. So in the resemblance of *fiery tongues* came down this Spirit on the apostles; and thence they themselves were as *burning coals* scattered through the nations, blessed incendiaries of the world, setting it on fire with the love of Christ: *tanquam ligna ardentia dispersa*, says Augustine.

VER. 7. And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged.

*Thine iniquity is taken away,*—how impure soever before. This free grace is wonderful, to make some who have been notoriously unclean, by the change wrought by this fire, the touch of a coal, to become eminently gracious, and messengers of grace to others, carrying this and spreading it. They, though originally of dark clay, are by this fire made transparent glass through which the light of the gospel shines into the church.

This *coal taken from the altar*, may denote the deriving of the Spirit from Jesus Christ, our priest, altar, sacrifice, and all, by which we are purified and made fit for his service. He is the fountain of light, and life, and purity, and all grace to his messengers, and all his followers. His grace is indeed a *live coal*, where heavenly heat is mixed with earth, the fulness of the Godhead with our nature in human flesh. Thereby we draw near; and especially they who bear his name to men, under a sense of their own impurity, entreat his touch, as devout Bernard, who, in a holy hyperbole, exclaims, "had the prophet need of a coal! Oh, then, grant for me a whole globe of fire, to purge away my filthiness, and make me a fit messenger to this people!"

*Thy sin is purged.*] The children of God are a wonder to themselves, when that Spirit comes in, who conquers and purges so suddenly and easily what they before groan under and wrestle with, very long to little or no purpose. It is *a change of the right hand of the Most High*, as the Vulgate reads that word in Psalm lxxvii. 10: *I said, this is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High—mutatio dextræ Excelsi.* A touch of that will cleanse and heal: the all-purifying virtue of his Spirit, whereof this baptism of the prophet's lips was a symbol, takes away the dross which by other means than that *fire* can not be purged. So in metals, much pains may be taken, and strength of hand used with little effect; that at most does but scratch the superfices, makes the outside a little bright and shining, but severs not the dross from within: that can not be done without fire. Have we not found how vainly we attempt while God withholds his hand? Yea, while a man fancies selfpureness, he is the more impure, as Job says, chap. ix. 30, 31. *If I wash myself with snow-water, and make myself ever so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.* Therefore, prayer is the great resource of a soul under a sense of uncleanness, begging a new creation, for such it is indeed: *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me;*—following God with this suit, and resolving to follow him till he grant it: for we well know he is able, and may say, *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*

This *fire* hath two effects: it works purity and activity; it takes away sin, and puts in spirit and life for obedience. And here *Thy sin is purged*, and then says he, ver. 8, *Here am I: send me.* And the former is effectual toward the latter: the more the soul is cleansed, the more alive and able it is made for service. The purging out of those sickly humors makes it more vigorous and able; whereas, they abounding clog the spirits, and

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make the vital operations heavy and weak. A soul well cleansed from the love of sin, and the world, and self, is in a healthful temper, and goes nimbly to any work. Outward discouragements and difficulties are then nothing. A feverish distemper within hinders and makes one lazy and unwieldy, unwilling and unable to labor: but that well purged and cured, he cares less for the hot weather without; strength of nature endures that more easily. Oh, how sweet to be thus actuated by love, a pure intention and desire of doing God service, and of bringing him in glory! Other motives, or the mixtures of them, are base; and though God may make use sometimes of such, yet he sees within, and knows what spring makes the wheels go, and he gives them their reward here,—somewhat possibly of that they seek, success, and credit, and a name; but the after-reward of faithful servants they need not look for in that work: for they receive their reward, and can they expect more? Many a *Here am I*, comes from other incentives than an *altar coal*; and so they burn and shine a while, but they soon consume and die out in a snuff: the heavenly altar-fire alone keeps in, and returns to heaven where it was kindled.

There is many a hot, furious march under the semblance and name of zeal for God, that loves to be seen; as Jehu, 2 Kings x. 16. *Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord.* Such persons may flatter themselves into that conceit in the heat of action to think it is for God, while he sees through it, and judges it as it is, zeal for self and their own interest; and he gives them, accordingly, some hireling journeyman's wages, and then turns them off. But oh, where the heart is purely actuated by a desire of his glory, and seeks nothing else, for such remains that blessed word, *Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into thy master's joy.*

This, then, is to be sought for by ministers and eminent servants in public affairs, yea, by all that offer any service to God, a readiness from love. Something of this there is in all who are truly his, though held down in many, and almost smothered with rubbish; and in these there is some mixture of flesh drawing back. *The spirit is ready, but the flesh is weak*, and a load to it, hindering its working; and this strife is often found as a horse to an unskilful rider, at once pricked with the spur and checked with the bridle. But where this spirit of love is, it doth prevail, and wastes that opposition daily, and groweth in strength, becomes more quick and ready, more freed from self, and more actuated by the will of God; attaining somewhat further in that conformity with heaven, where shall be no will striving, but his alone; where those glorious bright spirits stand ready for all commands, *who excel in strength*, and employ it all *to do his commandments.* Psalm ciii. 20. And the more like them we be here, the more lively hope have we to be shortly with them, and to be wholly as they are.

Ver. 8. Also, I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I: send me.

This inquiry imports not a doubtful deliberation in God, but a purpose to send. He is represented as a king, advising with himself or his council. And this is by some conceived as an intimation of the mystery of the Trinity, as Gen. i. 26, *And God said, Let us make man in our own image.—Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?* But were there not ready, millions of these winged messengers? What need, then, of such a word? True; angels were ready, but a man was sought. God, vouchsafing to send an embassy to men, will send one that might speak their language to them, and might stay and treat with them in a familiar, friendly way, an ambassador in ordinary, to lie still and treat with them. And in this condescension much wisdom and love appear. He will take men, subject to the like infirmities and pollutions with the people, as the prophet here acknowledges, but one purged from these pollutions, made holy; though not perfectly, yet eminently holy. This is very suitable; were not men invincibly obstinate, more suitable than that God should send by angels, that one of themselves should come and deal with men for God, and bear witness of his graciousness and readiness to forgive, so as to give himself for an instance of it, and say, "I have found him so." And they being changed and sanctified, show really that the thing may be done; that it is feasible to sanctify a sinner; and so, sinful men appear to be fitter for this service than imbodied angels.

*I said, Here am I: send me.*] What a blessed change was wrought on Paul, when cast to the ground! His own will was broken all to pieces, and now he is only for his service, whose name he so hated, and whose servants he persecuted. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts ix. 6. These are the very words and characters of a true convert. And thus, a soul turned to Christ may in some cases doubt what is his will, but that once resolved, there is no deliberation whether to do it or not. He says not, if the service be honorable or profitable, that is, carrying worldly credit or profit in it, then will I do it; no, but whatever it is, if it be thine, and thou appoint me to it, *Here am I.* And this makes the meanest work of his station excellent.

*Then said I, Here am I.*] A strange change in the prophet; even but now an *undone man*, and here presently a ready messenger, and so turned to an angel. Something of this, most find who are truly called to this high work of delivering messages from God: sometimes a sense of pollution benumbs and strikes them dead, and anon again they feel the flame of love kindled by that coal, quickening them to such a readiness, and such free offers of them-



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selves to service, as, to those who understand not the reason of it, would seem presumptuous forwardness. And there may be in some minds, at one and the same time, a strange mixture and counterworking of these two together; a sense of unfitness and unworthiness drawing back, and yet the strength of love driving forward, thinking thus, how can I, who am so filthy, so vile, speak of God? Yet he hath shown me mercy! How then can I be silent?

*Send me.*] Moses's reluctance, this same prophet would have vented too, before the touch of the coal, while he said, *Wo is me, I am undone*, or *struck down*, as the word may signify; he can not speak with such unholy lips of so holy a God. Isaiah cries out of *polluted lips*, as Moses complained of *stammering lips*. And this is fit to precede, first, a sense of extreme inability and unworthiness, and then, upon a change and call, ready obedience. A man once undone and dead, and then recovered, is the only fit messenger for God. In such a one, love overcomes all difficulties both without and within, and in his work no constraint is he feeling but that of love; and where that is, no other will be needed. The sweet, all-powerful constraint of love will send thee all-cheerful, though it were through fire or water: no water can quench it, nor fire out-burn it; it burns hotter than any other kindled against it. After the touch of that *coal*, no forbearing. So Jer. xx. 9: *But his word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, I could not stay. Feed the flock of God which is among you*, says St. Peter, *taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.* 1 Pet. v. 2. Yet the prophet says, *Send me.* Though he had so ardent a desire and readiness to go, yet he will not go unsent, but humbly offers himself, and waits both for his commission and instruction: and how awful are they!

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## LECTURE III.

Ver. 9. And he said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

Ver. 10. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

His message, you see, is most sad, and so he is put to it, put to the trial of his obedience, as men usually are according to the degree of their fitness. Nothing is more sweet to a messenger than to have good news to carry. Oh, it is a blessed sweet thing to convert souls! But how heavy to harden them by preaching! Yet thus it is to many at some times, and almost generally to all. Certainly, before this, much had been heard and despised: they had been hardening their own hearts, and now they shall have enough of it; their very sins shall be their plague, a plague of all others the most terrible, yet, as was said above, there are times of the height of this plague, as of others, and this was one of those times of its raging mortality. The prophet did nothing but preach, and yet they were stupified by it. And indeed, wherever the word does not soften and quicken, it hardens and kills; and the more lively the ministry of the word is where it works this effect, the more deeply doth it work it.

This was verified on the Jews: though then God's own people, yet is was verified on them to the utmost. And this context is often cited against them in the New Testament; no place so often. So excellent a preacher as Isaiah, and so well reputed among his people, yet was sent to preach them blind, and deaf, and dead. And this same does the gospel to most of many a congregation in Scotland: and the more of Christ that is spoken, the more are unbelievers hardened. Isaiah, the most evangelical of all the prophets, was yet brought to that, *Who hath believed our report?* Yea, this was fulfilled in the preaching of Christ himself; as the hotter the sun, the more is the clay hardened.

*Go tell this people.*] Observe the mighty power of the word, to whatsoever it is sent. As it is wonderfully efficacious for softening, melting, reducing to God, so, if it be sent to harden, to seal to judgment, to bring in and hasten it; and therefore it is spoken of as effecting the things it speaks: as in Jer. i. 10, *See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant.* So Ezek. xliii. 3, and Hos. vi. 5. Therefore, despise it not. Spiritual judgments are the heaviest of all: though least felt for a time, yet they stick closest, and prove saddest in the end. The not feeling, is a great part of the plague: in this is the nature and malignity of the disease, that it takes away the sight and sense of other things, and of itself. The plague is a disease seizing on the spirits, and therefore is so dangerous; but this seizes only on the spirit of the mind: and is anything so dreadful? Oh, any plague but that of the heart. People think it a good thing not to feel the word, not to be troubled. Well, as they love this, they are filled with it, and shall have enough of it. So in self-love, *sui amator sibi dat.* God is righteous and pure in this. There are many cavils about his working on the heart to harden, which arise from an ignorant, low conceit of God, as of a dependant being, or tied to laws, or to give account. We ought rather to tremble before him. *He doth no iniquity*, and we shall be forced to confess it. Many ways of his are obscure, but none are unjust. Find we not this people sit under the sound, and are many of them as if absent, as if they had never heard such things spoken of; so

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grossly ignorant of all these? *Hearing, they hear, but understand not.* Others are yet worse: they get a kind of knowledge, but it is dead, and works nothing. These *see*, and yet *perceive not*, and know not even what they know. Most are of this sort, and they are of all others the worst to convince. When they are told of Christ and forgiveness of sins, and are entreated to believe these mysteries, they cry out, "Oh! we do, we know them, and can answer, if you ask us, what these doctrines are." But the heart is not changed, no sin is forsaken, no study of holiness, no flame of love. This *not perceiving*, is the great judgment of this land; this the great cause of lamentation, that Christ is so much known, and yet known so little. People do not think whither it tends, and what the importance of this message is. They hear it as *a passing tale*, or, at the best, as for the present, a pleasing sound, *a lovely song*, Ezekiel xxxiii. 32; and if by an able minister, as sung by a good voice; but no impression is made, it dies out in the air, it enters not into their hearts to quicken them, and so their evil is the more deadly. Oh! bemoan this, beg the removal of it above all judgments, and the sending forth of that Spirit who causes *the mountains to flow down.* Isa. lxiv. 1. Many of you, my brethren, may be under somewhat of this, as there are divers degrees of it ere it comes to be incurable. Oh! pray to be delivered, lest it grow so far that be in vain to bid you do so. Better to be cast into extreme terrors for a time than to continue thus: better to fall into a fever, than into this lethargy, which makes you sleep to death.

*Convert, and be healed.*] These two go together: all miseries are healed, and grace and favor flow forth, when once the soul is stirred up to seek after God, and turn unto him. Other courses of healing public or private evils, are but mountebank cures, which vex and torment, as unapt physic does, and do no good; yea, make things worse than before. See Hosea v. 13, compared with ch. vi. 1: *When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to King Jareb; yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound.—Come and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.*

There is much in a custom of fruitless hearing, to stupify and make hard—to make men sermon-proof. And the hearing of the most excellent, hardens most, both against them, and against all others that are their inferiors; for being accustomed to hear the most moving strains unmoved, makes them scorn, and easily beat back that which is less pressing. A largely endued and very spiritual minister, is either one of the highest blessings, or heaviest curses, that can come upon a people.

*Hearing, hear not.*] This even the ministers themselves may fall under: speakers may have no ears, as the Italian proverb says of preachers, "They do not hear their own voice." They may grow hard, by custom of speaking of Divine things without Divine affection; so that nothing themselves or others say, can work on them. Hence it is that so few formal dead ministers are converted, that one said, *Raro vidi clericum pœnitentem;* so hardened are they against the means of conviction, in which they have been so long conversant, and not converted by them. They have been speaking so often of heaven and hell, and of Jesus Christ, and feeling nothing of them, that the words have lost their power, and they are grown hard as the skin of leviathan, *esteeming iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood.* And this, by-the-way, beside that God's dispensation is so fixed, may be a reason why that sin mentioned in the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, is unpardonable; it is, in the nature of things, without such a miracle as God will not exert, *impossible* that they who have stood out such things in vain, *should be renewed.* This should make us who are ministers, especially to tremble at an unholy life, or at the thought of declining from those ways of religion, of which we have known so much, and for which we have so many means of improvement.

VER. 11. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate;

VER. 12. And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.

Now this judgment fastening, we are sure to draw on all other judgments. Therefore, the prophet, touched with compassion, inquires, *How long?* and receives a very sad answer, *Until the cities be wasted.* God is sovereignly free in this; but usually he keeps that course, that long-continued and spared sinning, makes long-continued calamities when they come; judgments, as the ancients thought comets to be, are as lasting as the matter is they are kindled with; and truly, upon this account, we may justly apprehend that *our* troubles are but just beginning, rather than near their end. Yet, repentance might prevail for the shortening of them: those sweet showers soonest lay the stormy winds.

And this consideration may have something hopeful in it, that in these latter times, things move something more speedily, as natural motions do toward their end; for *a short work will God make upon the earth*, as the apostle's word is; and we see in our particular straits that were greatest, that the Lord hath made them short even beyond our expectation; and what remains is in his hand. I trust he will hasten the defeat of the plots and power of his enemies; and doubt not all the late and present commotions of these poor kingdoms are the birth-pangs of a happy deliverance and peace, and when they grow thickest, it is nearest the birth.

*How long?*] Observe the compassion of

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the messengers of God, not desiring the evil day, but mourning for it, pitying those they denounce judgment against, and melting for those they harden.

*Till the cities be wasted.*] This intimates there would be no relenting under all these judgments, but that these, as well as the word, and together with it, would harden them more, till they were almost quite consumed. And this is usual. Men think it would be otherwise, but it is found that times of great plagues and judgments are not times of great conversion: men are then more hardened both against the word and the rod; their spirits grow stiff and obdurate in a kind of desperation. But mercy, coming as the spring sunshine, mollifies, and dissolves, and makes fruitful; therefore such a day is to be longed for. I suspect we shall not see much done by the gospel till then; and before that, we may suffer yet more dismal things, and be wasted with pestilence, sword, and famine. Yet there is comfort in this, the Lord will not make a full end of us: *a tenth* shall be left; and if not we, yet at least our posterity shall reap the sweet fruits of our bitter calamities, which are the just fruits of our iniquities.

VER. 13. But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten; as a teil-tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves, so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.

THERE is still a remnant holy to God, the preservers of a land from utter ruin. Profane persons despise the children of God, and know not that they are beholden to them for the subsistence of the land, and of the world: they are as those oaks, whose roots did bear up the earth of that highway that went between the king's house and the temple, as the resemblance is taken by some.

In judgments, the Lord remembers that. *Destroy it not, there is a blessing in it.* As for the personal condition of believers, there may be a great decay, a winter visage may be upon it; but yet, the holy seed abideth in them, and is their stability, and still that word is true that is borrowed hence, *Semen sanctum, statumen terræ:* The holy seed, the subsistence or establishment of the earth. When their number is completed, time shall end, and this visible world shall be set on fire. And this day is hastening forward, though most of us think but little, if at all, of it.

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# EXPOSITORY LECTURE ON ROMANS XII. 3 12.

VER. 3. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

BESIDE the common word of *edification* implying it, we find often in the Scriptures, *teaching* compared to *building;* and, among other things, the resemblance holds in this, that in both, of necessity, there is a foundation first to be laid, and then the structure to be raised upon it. He that gives rules of life, without first fixing principles of faith, offers preposterously at building a house without laying a foundation: and he that instructs what to believe, and directs not withal a believer how to live, doth in vain lay a foundation without following out the building. But the apostles were not so *foolish builders* as to sever these two in their labors in the church. In this epistle we find our apostle excellently acquitting himself in both these. He first largely and firmly lays the groundwork, in the foregoing part of the epistle: now, he adds exhortations and directions touching the particular duties of Christians.

The first thing, certainly, to be done with a soul, is, to convince it of sin and death, then to address and lead it unto Christ, our righteousness and life; this done, it should be taught to follow him. This is Christianity, *to live in Christ,* and *to live to Christ;* to live in him by faith, and to live to him in holiness. These our apostle joined in his doctrine, ch. viii. 1: *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

The exhortation that begins this chapter, hath in it the whole sum of Christian obedience, fitly expressed and strongly urged; and in that are all particular rules comprised.

But because of our ignorance and our sloth, we do not always readily draw forth particulars from those comprehensive general rules wherein they lie; we need, therefore, to be assisted in this; and to this the Scriptures descend, particularly the apostles in their epistles, and that usually in the latter part of them. And this is a main part of our duty in preaching the word, often to represent these rules to you, not so much that you may understand them better, though somewhat of this likewise may be needful, as that you may remember them, and eye them more, and walk according to them; and there is no more in these things truly known, than what

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is known after this manner. I have endeavored, in the course of my teaching, to reach this end. My design, and I hope yours likewise, hath been, not to pass so much time, nor to pass it with empty delight, which in other things might be done at an easy rate, but that you be really built up heavenward, and increase with the increase of God; that the truth and power of Christianity may possess our hearts, and grow there, and may be evident in our lives, to the glory of our Lord Jesus.

We shall endeavor to lay before you the particular graces that are the ornaments of Christians; and this, not that you may look on them simply, and commend them, but that you may pursue them, and be clothed with them, and then they will be much more comely and commendable: as a robe of rich apparel, if it seem fine while it hangs or lies by, it appears far better when it is put on.

The rules the apostle is to give, he prefaces thus, *For I say, through the grace given to me*—I speak as the messenger or apostle of Christ, according to that knowledge and experience that he hath given to me of these things; and so take it, as from one that hath some interest in, and share of, these graces I recommend to you. And this, indeed, makes recommendations carry home. Oh, that we could truly say this! Alas! it is an uncomfortable, and commonly an unprofitable thing, to speak of Christ and the graces of his Spirit, only as having heard of them, or read of them, as men that travel in their studies, do of foreign countries.

Διὰ τῆς χάριτος. The apostle represents this, to add the more authority, and gain the more acceptance, to what he had to say; and for this end, some care is to be had of the good opinion of people, so far as their interest is concerned, that the message we bring be not prejudged: otherwise, this truly set aside, it were little matter how we were mistaken or despised, yea, it were a thing someway desirable; only provided nothing be done on purpose that may justly, yea, or that may probably, procure it, for that both piety and charity forbid.

*To every man.*] This is more pressing than if he had said simply, *to you*, or generally, *to you all;* for in men's talking of things, it proves often too true, *Quod omnibus, nemini*, What is said to all, is said to no one; but *to every one*, that each one may suppose it spoken to him, as an ingenious picture looking to each in the room. Thus we ought to speak, and thus ye ought to hear. We to speak, not as telling some unconcerning stories, but, as having business with you; and you to hear, not each for another, as you often do—"Oh! such a passage touched such a one"—but each for himself.

The first particular the apostle recommends, is that gracing grace of humility, the ornament and the safety of all other graces, and which is so peculiarly Christian. Somewhat philosophers speak of temperance, justice, and other like virtues, but these tend rather to blow up and swell the mind with big conceit and confidence of itself, than to dwell together with self-abasement and humility. But in the school of Christ, the first lesson of all is, *self-denial and humility;* yea, it is written above the door, as the rule of entry or admission, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.* And out of all question, that is truly the humblest heart which hath most of Christ in it.

*Not to think highly.*] Not aspiring and intending in things too high. And a great point of humility is subjection to God in the point of knowledge; in this was our first climbing that proved our fall; and yet still, amid all our ignorance and darkness, we are catching and gaping after the deadly fruit of unallowed knowledge.

This, withal, hath in it the attempering of our thoughts and practices to our measure and station; to know ourselves truly and thoroughly: for that will certainly beget a very low esteem of ourselves, to judge ourselves the unworthiest and meanest of all.

And having truly this estimate of ourselves, we shall not vainly attempt anything above our reach, nor disdainfully neglect anything that is within the compass of our calling and duty; which are the two evils so common among men, yea even among Christians, and in the church of God, and are the cause of most of the enormities and disorders that fall out in it. It is strange blindness, that they who do grossly miscarry in the duties of their own station, yet so readily fancy themselves capable of somewhat higher, and think themselves wronged if it be refused them.

The self-knowing Christian would rather descend, and finds himself very disproportioned to his present station, be it never so mean. He can say with David, *Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.* Psalm cxxxi. 1. But vain minds would still be tampering with the greatest affairs, and dwell not with themselves. Oh! my brethren, be entreated to study your own hearts better. Be less abroad in things that concern you not. There is work enough within you; heaps of base lusts, and self-deceits, and follies, that you see not yet; and many advantages of good things you seem to see in yourselves, that indeed are not there. Self-love is a flattering glass, which represents us to ourselves much fairer than we are; therefore turn from it, if you desire a true account of yourselves, and look into the pure and faithful mirror of God's law. Oh! what deformities will that discover, which you never saw nor thought of before: it will make you the lowest of all persons in your own eyes.

This low self-esteem doth not wholly take away the simple knowledge of what gifts and graces God hath bestowed on a man; for

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that were to make him both unthankful and unuseful. *Qui se nescit, nescit se uti.* He who doth not know what God hath freely given him, can not return praise to God, nor make use of himself for God in his station. Yea, the apostle's caution intimates a sober, humble reflection on the *measure* God hath given a man, as what he not only allows but requires; and himself gives example of it in his own present expression, declaring that he speaks these things *through the grace that is given* to him.

But this knowledge of a man's own gifts and graces, that it may not preclude his attaining more, but help him to more, in the humble acknowledgment and use of what he hath, should have these two qualifications: 1. That he beware of overweening; that he take his *measure* much below, rather than any whit beyond what he truly hath. 2. That whatsoever it is, he always look on it, not as his own, but as God's, having his superscription on it, and all the glory of it being his peculiar tribute; nothing of that to be interrupted or retained: *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.* Still, all the glory entirely sent up to him. Thus, here, the apostle sets all grace in that view. *As God hath dispensed the measure;* and so speaks of his own, *Through the grace given to me.* Still is it to be looked on, not as what we have, but as what he hath given. That is the gospel style, *Grace, free gifts*—χαρις χαρίσματα. Whereas philosophy speaks of all as habits, or havings, or possessions.

Now, viewed in that relative dependant notion of *freely given*, a man shall never be puffed up by any endowments, though he see and know them: yea, the more he knows them thus, he will be the more humble still, as being the more obliged. The more he hath received, the greater they are, the lower he bows, pressed down under the weight of his engagements to God: as Abraham *fell on his face* when *God talked with him*, and made so rich promises to him. Gen. xvii. 3. See David's strain, 1 Chron. xxix. 15: *But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.* This the apostle gives as the sovereign preservative against the swelling poison of conceit, *What hast thou that thou didst not receive?* 1 Cor. iv. 7.

He who is thus regulated in his own esteem, will, by this, certainly, be moderated in his desire of esteem from others, and can not well meet with anything that way, that will either puff him up, or cast him down: if overprized by others, he takes that as their mistake; if undervalued, he rejoices in that, having set himself so low in himself that others can not well set him lower. So when men account meanly of him, they are really of his own opinion; and you know that offends none, that pleases them rather, to have others agree with their opinions, and be of their mind.

They who are busy after reputation, and would be esteemed, are but begging voices, they would have others think with them, and confirm the conclusion they have already resolved on, in favor of themselves; and this is a most foolish thing; for, disappointed in this, men are discontented, and so their peace hangs on others' fancies; and if satisfied with it, they surfeit and undo themselves with the delight of it. Bees sometimes kill themselves with their own honey; and there is such a word to this purpose, Prov. xxv. 27: *It is not good to eat much honey; so, for men to search their own glory, is not glory.*

VER. 4, 5. For as we have many members in one body and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

IN this consideration we have God's wisdom manifested, and are instructed what is *our* wisdom. He, in the great world, made all by weight, number, and measure; so, in the lesser world, man, and in the new world, his church, he proportions all to the use he hath designed them for. He could give to them who have least, more than the very greatest have, but he thought this unfit: it might be some advantage to them, yet to the whole body not so; and therefore not truly so to them neither, being parts of it, and having their good involved in the good of the body.

This resemblance is often used in Scripture, and holds excellently well, but is little learned. Our temper and carriage correspond not to it. Who is there almost that finds it, the Spirit of Christ in them, knitting them to him as the common head, and one to another, as one in him; each busy to advance him, and so seeking his glory, and to promote the good of one another? But alas! rather each is for self, accursed self, as of an independent divided substance; yea worse, hating and tearing one another, a monstrous sight, as if one limb of the same body should be pulling another to pieces. It signifies little to tell men what mutual tenderness there is in nature; that for a thorn in the foot, the back bows, the head stoops, the eyes look, the hands feel, and seek it, to pull it out.* Christians are still so rigid, so unchristian to each other, they drive one another with the thorn sticking in, forcing their brethren to ways against the persuasions of their consciences.

In the following verses, *viz.*, 6, 7, 8, we have a specification of divers offices, and the duties of them; the due observance of which is essential to the peace and growth of the church, makes all go on sweetly and fruitfully. But men are either presumptuously or preposterously busy out of their own station, or slothfully negligent in it; and both these, instead of edifying, are discomposing and destroying things.

* Spinam calcat pes, &c.—AUGUSTINE.

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Not to insist on the distinction of offices, it is evident, in all enumerations of this kind, that the same word sometimes means divers things, and divers words mean the same thing, as *ministry* may comprise all, though sometimes peculiar to deacons, sometimes taken for teachers or pastors. Here it is general, and the particulars following distribute it: some are *to teach*, which is doctorial; some *to exhort*, which is more pastoral; some are *to give*, which is proper to deacons; some have their whole charge *to rule*, as elders; some are particularly for attendance on the sick.

But in all, fidelity and sedulity are requisite. How high soever men are placed, if they are unfaithful, the higher judgment awaits them. How low soever, if thou be sincere and studious of thy duty, thou shalt sustain no loss by thy low station, but rather thy faithfulness will be the more set off by it: *He that is faithful in little, shall be made ruler over much.* Oh, that *we* were more eaten up with zeal of our Lord's house and winning of souls, whom he deputes to that! Oh, that they who rule would study more rule of their own houses, that should go before, and of their own hearts, that should be first of all! Alas! how shall men whose passions and lusts rule them, well rule the house of God? Be afraid and wise, ye who are called to that, and know at length, what is so generally either unknown or unconsidered, the exemplary holiness required in your persons, and the diligent watchfulness over the *flock of God.* There are many debates, and troubles, and pains about these our liberties, but little diligence in the use of them. Congregations are still as full of impiety and profaneness as ever. Oh! take heed, lest we thus forfeit them after all they have cost, and provoke God to bereave us of them. Men are busy, who, we know, are not friends to the church of God. But oh, that we were more careful to be on good terms with HIM! *If HE be for us, who can be against us?* It is no matter who be; he is too wise and too strong for them all.

VER. 9. Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

THE whole sum of the law is, love; love to God, and love to man: these two contain all, and the former of the two contains the latter. Love to God is the only true principle and spring of all due love to man: and all love that begins there, returns thither likewise, and ends there.

The engaging of the whole mind and soul to the love of God, does not engross it so that there should be no kind of love communicable to man; on the contrary, it is to refine it, that it may flow forth the purer and better. All love should be first called in to God, to be sublimated and purified there, and then set in its right channel and motion, so as man may be loved in him and for him; not to impair our love to him, but indeed to extend and act it as he allows. And so to love man, is to love God, that love taking its rise from him, and terminating in him: and in this circle is the proper motion of celestial Divine love.

The duty, then, here meant and commanded, is this, *that we love one another.* And our love must be thus qualified; it must be unhypocritical and sincere, such as, though it may consist with, yet doth not wholly consist in civilities of expression and behavior, but a real benevolence of soul, and good will to all; a love disposing us readily to forgive evil, and to do good upon all occasions.

Yet this is not such a tenderness of complacency as leads to partake with any in any evil ways; Oh! no; *abhorring that which is evil*, flying from it with indignation, with a kind of antipathy. And thus it will be from the new nature in a Christian, the holy Spirit of Christ, which can not endure the unholiness or impurity of the world, but is chased away, as doves by noisome smells, or bees by smoke. This delicacy of spirit profane men laugh at, as a weak, foolish meanness; but, fools as they are, they know not that it arises from that highest *wisdom, which is from above*, which is indeed, *peaceable*, but first is *pure*, and can admit of no peace nor agreement with any persons or things that are impure. This is to be like the all-wise God, with whom *wickedness can not dwell*: his pure eyes can not pleasantly behold any iniquity.

Oh! much of the love of God would work more hatred of sin. But if thy hatred of evil be right, know it will begin at home; as we feel aversions and abhorrences most when the things are nearest us. It is not the upright nature of holiness, to hate sin in others, and to hug it, or spare it, in thyself, whether the same kind of sin, or any other; for if this abhorrence be right, it is against all sin, the whole, as natural contrarieties are, and it is most against it, where nearest in thyself. It is the true Divine fire of zeal, kindled by the love of God, that burns up sin, but first that which is nearest it, as a fire in the hearth does, and so reaches what is farther off. But if thy zeal fly most abroad upon others, it is an unruly, disordered wildfire, cracking and squibbing up and down, good for nothing but to set houses and towns on fire.

*Cleave to that which is good.*] This expresses a vehement and inseparable affection; loving and rejoicing in all the good thou seest in others; desiring and seeking after all the good thou canst attain unto thyself; and being more pleased with the society of godly persons than any other, such as will put thee, and keep thee, most in mind of thy home and the way thither, and admonish and reduce thee from any declining steps. Their reproofs are more sweet to thee than the laughter and flattery of profane men: as one said to his master, "Thou shalt find no staff

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hard enough to beat me from thee."* Though they seem harsh to thee, yet wilt thou say, *Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness.* Psalm. cxli. 5. And no opposition will drive thee from the truth of God and his ways, which are only good, if thy heart be once glued by love and fastened to them. Yea, thou wilt cleave the closer to it, the more thou art persecuted for the truth; and the more thou sufferest for it, wilt love it the better. The word that is used in marriage. of the husband *cleaving to* the wife, holds true in the soul once married to that which is good: all violence will be too weak to sever thee. Learn to know what this is that is truly *good*, to know the excellency and sweetness of holiness, and it will be impossible to part thy affection from it. But this is the reason why men are so soon shaken, and the slender hold they have removed; the superficies of the soul, only, is tied to the outside of religion, by some external relations and engagements, and these are a running knot that easily slips. Few *receive the truth in the love of it*, and have their hearts united to Jesus Christ, who is indeed all that GOOD we have to seek after, and to cleave to.

VER. 10. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another.

Now, in this way of holy, spiritual affection, seeking the true good of one another, be kind *in brotherly love;* not upon design of particular interest, but by a natural propension, such as is in creatures toward their young; such a tenderness as is among men of nearest relations, parents and children, and brethren; and know that you are indeed brethren of the highest birth and parentage, and so beyond all brethren, Christians are obliged to love one another. Alas! that in them, likewise, it should prove so unhappily true, *Fratrum quoque gratia rara est*, that the love of brethren is rare; that they should be so hardly drawn to acts of love, and so easily stirred to fits of anger and bitterness, one toward another! My beloved, are we Christians? Oh, where is the spirit of Christ? Where that great law of his, that badge of his followers, *love one another*, that by which the Christians of the first times, astonished the pagans about them? Yea, their very enemies and persecutors were amazed at it. It were well, and would be one considerable gain by our enemies, if their combinations and malice against the godly might drive them close together, and unite them more to one another in love.

*In honor preferring one another.*] Putting all possible respect on one another: this is not in ceremony or compliment, though these civilities that are due, and done without feignedness or affectation, are not disallowed, yea, are, I conceive, included; but in matter of real esteem, each *preferring one another.* For, though a man may see the weakness of those he converses with, yet passing, and, as far as he can, covering these, he ought to take notice of what is good. All have something commendable, and no one hath all; so the meanest may in something be preferable to the highest. And Christian humility and charity will seek out for and espy that, and for it put all respect upon them, that their quality and station are able to bear: and in this, one should prevent another, and strive who should do most in this kind, as a good and happy contention.

And the source of this is, *love to God*, which so mortifies the heart to all outward advantages, that, further than a man is tied by place and calling, he would not receive, much less desire, any kind of respect from any, but had rather be slighted and disregarded. What cares a soul enamoured with the glory to come, for the vain passing air of preference and honor here? That it can easily bate to any, and, so far as a man has any power of it, would put it upon others, far rather than own it himself. Such a one can sweetly please himself in being the meanest in all companies where he comes, and passing for such, and he is glad of respect done to others; still looking homeward, where there is no prejudging one another at all, but perfect unenvying and unenvied glory. Glory here is to be shunned rather than pursued, and if it will follow, yet is less to be regarded than thy shadow. Oh, how light and vanishing is it, and even things more solid than it! *The fashion of this world passeth away.*

VER. 11. Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

*Not slothful in business.*] These condensed rules have much in them; and this one is very needful, for often a listless, indisposed weariness overtakes even good men: seeing so little to be done to any purpose, they are almost ready to give over all; yet, they ought to bestir themselves, and apply to diligence in their place. Be not unduly stickling and busy in things improper, but enclosing thy diligence within thy sphere. Suffer it not to stand, but keep it there in motion. As to thy worldly affairs, be so diligent as to give them good despatch, when thou art about them, but have thy heart as little in them, as much disengaged as may be; yet so acquitting them wisely, they shall trouble thee the less, when thou art in higher and better employments. As to thyself, be often examining thy heart and ways, striving constantly against sin; though little sensible advantage be gained, yet, if thou yield, it will be worse; if it prevail so much amidst all thy opposition, what would it do if thou shouldst sit still! Use all holy means, how fruitless soever they seem for the present, and *wait on God. We have toiled all night*, said Simon, *and taken nothing*, Luke v. 5: and yet, at his command, essaying again, they took more at once, than if, after their ordinary way, they had been

* Ὅτι τὸ ξύλον τορφύσεις, &c.

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taking all night. So as to others, give not up because thou seest no present success, but, in thy place, *admonish, exhort,* and *rebuke,* with all meekness and patience. Doth God wait on sinners, and wilt not thou wait a little for others?

*Fervent in spirit.*] Beware of a fretful impatience; that is a sickly distempered heat, as that of a fever, which makes a man unfit for work, and men commonly in this break away from their business; but much healthful, natural heat makes a man strong and able to endure labor and continue in it. This is the thing here recommended. To be so hot and *fervent in spirit,* is a great advantage; it is the very strength of the soul in all employments. Much love to God, and desire of his glory, this is the heat that will not weary, will cheerfully go through all discouragements: *many waters will not quench it.* This fervor of spirit, wrought by the Spirit of God, doth clearly distinguish itself from that inordinate heat of our spirits, which may sometimes either act alone, or mingle itself with the other in the best causes and affairs. This holy fervor is composed and regular in working, runs not headily to unadvised or disorderly ways; it is a sweet delightful heat, not painful and vexing as the other; it carries on to duty, and is not disturbed about events.

*Serving the Lord.*] Some copies have it, *serving the time;* which may bear a fair construction, of taking present occasions of good, and being useful in our generation, and accommodating ourselves in all lawful things to times and persons, for their good, as our apostle *became all things to all, to win some;* yet, this kind of expression not being found elsewhere in scripture, and the most copies having it as we read it, and some mistake of letters in transcribers seeming to have occasioned it, it is much rather to be taken as in our version.

But, out of all question, some do follow that mistaken reading in its worst sense: instead of *serving the Lord,* serving the times. And this some do even in evil ways; others, in ways that are good, yet, following upon trust, and complying, though unwillingly, because the times carry things so; but when times change to the worse, these men are discovered, for still they serve their master, the times, and their own advantage in them: which way soever that goes, they follow; so that their following the better side in better times, is but accidental.

But this *serving the Lord,* is more even and lasting; serving him still in all times, doing all for him, having no aim but his glory. Such a heart can not be diverted from its course by any counter-blast of times.

Would you be steadfast in times of approaching trial, seek to have your hearts acquainted with God, and fixed on him. For others will be shaken: but such will follow him through all hazards, and fear no ill while he is with them.

VER. 12. Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation continuing instant in prayer.

*Rejoicing in hope.*] Oh, this we seldom do. When are our hearts as if transported with the blessed *hope of our inheritance?* This would make us what follows.

*Patient in tribulation.*] People would hear much of this, of preparing for suffering. There may be a distemper in desiring to hear and speak so much of that. What though trials be coming, as it is likely they are, we should account too much of ourselves, and this present world, to dwell expressly on that subject. We see the apostles do not so, though they lived and wrote in the times of another sort of persecution than we have yet seen; and they to whom the apostle here writes lived where it was most violent and potent, and yet they spend not all on this: some brief words of it are interspersed with the discourse thrown as it were into a parenthesis: but still, the main is, the doctrine of faith and rules of holiness. And these are indeed the great furniture for all sufferings: I know no other. To see much of the excellency and worth of Jesus Christ, and the riches of our hope in him; to have these in our view, much in our hearts and in our mouths; these drown all the little fears of present things. See how, in passing, our apostle speaks, as it were in a slighting way, of all sufferings for him: I have cast it up, says he, and *I reckon that the sufferings of this present time* (*of this* NOW) *are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

Again, the other thing is, the rules of holiness: these powerfully enable for suffering anything rather than unholiness. That sickness of the soul, those corrupt humors of sin, make it crazy, so that it can endure no blasts of air; but when it is purged and free from these, and in communion with God in his ways, then it is healthful and strong, and so, is able to endure anything. The mortifying of our affections to the world, that is what enables for suffering. Whither reaches the cruelty of man, but to thy goods or thy body? And what makes any faint, but an over esteem of these, by which they are filled with desires to preserve, and fears to lose them? Now, when the heart is disengaged from these, and hath taken up in God, is rich and content in him, it stands not much to the courtesy of any: let them take the rest, *it suffers with joy, the spoiling of goods, having in heaven a more enduring substance.* Heb. x. 34. And for the utmost killing them, they look on it as the highest favor: it is to them but the making a hole for them in their prison-wall to get out at. Therefore, I say, there is nothing doth so fit for all encounters, as to be much instructed in that which is the substance of Christianity, hearts purified, and lives holily and spiritually regulated. In a word much study of Christ, and much study of thyself for aught I know, are the wisest and strongest preparatives for all possible sufferings.



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How sweetly can the soul retire into him, and repose in him, in the greatest storms! I know nothing that can much dismay him who can believe and pray.* That, you see, is added.

*Continuing instant in prayer.*] If afraid of fainting, yea, if at the point of fainting, this revives the soul, draws in no less than the strength of God to support it: and what then can surcharge it?

* Nempe tenens quod amo, nihil, illum amplexus, timebo.

Thy access to him, all the enemies in the world can not hinder. The closest prison shuts not out thy God; yea, rather it shuts out other things and companies, that thou mayest have the more leisure for him, and the sweeter converse with him. Oh! acquaint yourselves with this exercise of prayer, and by it with God, that if days of trouble come you may know whither to go, and what way and if you know this way, whatever befalls you, you are not much to be bemoaned.

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# LECTURES

ON THE

# FIRST NINE CHAPTERS OF ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

## CHAPTER I.

**Ver. 1. The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.**

As the bounty of God appears in the furniture and comforts of our natural life, in that he hath not only provided for simple necessity, but enriched it with plentiful variety; thus he hath done likewise toward the spiritual life in the provision of the Holy Scriptures, having in them so rich diversity of the kind of writings, prophecies and histories, poesies and epistles, and of the kind, and expressly on the same subject, four books written by the hands of four several men, but all led by the hand of the same Spirit, and all of them so harmoniously according together, as makes up one song; the four with a delightful variety of notes, but no mistuning, or jarring difference: those that seem to be so, being duly considered, do not only well agree, but there is still some instructive advantage in the diversity; each recording something, some of them divers things that are not in the other; and what one hath more briefly, is more enlarged in some other: they are not so different as to be discordant, nor so the same as to be superfluous. Their order in the time of their writing is, with good reason, conceived to be the same with that of their placing as we have them. This of St. Matthew was written first, and very likely in Hebrew, as more particularly for the use of his own nation, though in His purpose who set him on to work (as all the other scriptures) intended for the good of the church in all succeeding ages. And he begins with the great mysterious point on which hangs our happiness, that which is our grand comfort, as St. Austin speaks, *the manhood of God*. The chapter hath these two, *his genealogy*, and *his nativity*, each particularly intituled; for the first words are the inscription, not of the whole book, nor of the whole chapter, but only of the first part of it. *The book*, that is (as the the Hebrew word signifies), the *roll*, or *list* of the *generation*, that is, the descent of *Jesus Christ*.

The account by ascending, as St. Luke does, or by descending, as this evangelist, is altogether indifferent; neither need we, with the ancients, seek subtle and mysterious reasons of it, which are too airy to have either certain truth, or profitable use in them. The reckoning of the one only down from Abraham, and the other up to Adam, may have some more solid reason; the one having regard to the particular promise made to Abraham, and the other to the general interest of mankind, and that according to the promise made to our first parents in the garden. And this beginning in Abraham here, relishes somewhat of that we spake, of penning this gospel in Hebrew, with particular respect to the Jews for informing them first: as, indeed, the gospel was first to be preached to them, so might they have somewhat of the same privilege in the writing of it—he of whom it treats being born among them, and of them. And before entering to branch the lineage, the evangelist particularly mentions David and Abraham, because of the particular promises made to them of the Messiah to come of their seed.

The great diversity of the names from David to Joseph (of them all, indeed, save two) has drawn several persons to take the one for the line of Joseph, the other for the line of Mary. But the diversity of names ariseth not so much from the custom of that nation, of one person having divers names (which commonly is answered in this), though somewhat of that may be in it; but it is much rather from that, it seems, St. Matthew does deduce the legal succession in government (by Solomon), St. Luke the natural in birth (by Nathan). St. Matthew, to make up the number of his three fourteens, even omits some immediate parents, which alters nothing at all of the true deduction, and nephews are frequently called, and truly are, the sons of their grandfathers, though not immediate. Now, though it is possible that it might be otherwise, yet the evangelists take it as a thing then manifest and known when they wrote, that Joseph, according to the appointment and ordinary practice of his nation, did marry within his tribe and family. So that *his* extraction, who was but the supposed and nominal father, doth give account of Mary, the real mother of Jesus Christ. Other scruples, though it may be to some needful to clear them, yet I name not, as being useless to acquaint those with who find them not. And some there be altogether needless and curious, which may pass among the vain, unprofitable questions of genealogists that the apostle advises to avoid.

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VER. 18. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: when as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child by the Holy Ghost.

ST. LUKE is more large in the history of the conception, but (which the rest have not) this evangelist acquaints us with Joseph's behavior in the business. We have, 1st. His first doubtful thoughts within himself: 2d. His right information, and directions from God; 3d. His answerable acquiescence and obedience.

Perceiving Mary, who was espoused to him, to be with child before they came together, and not knowing how this came to pass, it would certainly perplex him much; yet goes he not in a sudden passion, or rage of jealousy, to take the extremest course, but *being a just man*, that is, not strict and severe, as taking justice in a strict sense, for so it would seem contrary to the present intendment;—yet, some have taken it so, *though he was a just man*;—but it is indeed rendered as the cause of his purpose of mitigating the law's rigor, and so, *just* is here a *good man*, a man of a moderate, mild spirit, averse from rigors, as good men usually are. And as his own temper, so, no doubt, Mary's carriage, did incline him to this way; observing her modesty and piety, which undoubtedly was singular, and would appear in her whole deportment; but further than that spake for her, it doth not appear that she spake all this while anything for herself: she offered not to declare the admirable way of her conception, which would have seemed feigned and incredible from her mouth, but quietly refers the matter to Him who had done it. Thus silent innocency rests satisfied in itself, where it may be inconvenient or fruitless to plead for itself, and loses nothing by doing so, for it is always in due season vindicated and cleared by a better hand. And thus it was here: she is silent, and God speaks for her.

Ver. 20. *While he thought on these things*, &c.] The whole matter is opened to him by the angel of God in a dream. This blessed child is owned by his glorious Father; the conception declared to be pure and supernatural by the Holy Ghost; his birth and name, and the reasons of it, are foretold; and upon these, Joseph is ascertained, not only of the spotless innocency, but of the matchless dignity, of his espoused Mary in this conception, and the true quality of her Divine Son, and so is furnished with sufficient ground of receiving her as his wife, which accordingly he forthwith did.

The last words of the chapter are added for the future clearness concerning the purity of his birth. But denying for the time before, which was to the present purpose, affirms nothing at all for the time after, as is evident by abundant instances of this manner of speech, where *until* goes no further than the named term any way, yea, does rather import the perpetuity of what it speaks; as Gen. xxviii. 15, *Until I have done that*, &c., and Isa xxii. 14, *Till ye die*—which yet hath not been alleged, for anything I know, for a purgatory after death.

Ver. 22. In the narration, the apostle inserts (as is his custom) the parallel of the thing with a prophecy foretelling all this, of the accommodating of which I will not now insist. It is evident that it looks beyond anything that those times, or that any time, before this fulness of time, did afford. And this singular Virgin's conception was altogether agreeable to the singular person so conceived and born, both as to the purity of his human, and the dignity of his Divine, nature; that he might be known to be not only a holy, sinless man, but more than a simple man, God-man, *God with us*, as his name is.

Observation. *The book of the generation of Jesus Christ.*] Many great volumes of history have been written of states and kingdoms of the earth, and lives of particular famous men, and the reading of them may delight and inform the mind; but what are they all, how empty and comfortless stuff in respect of this history! *The book of the generation of Jesus Christ.* This is the gospel, the alone good tidings to all nations and all ages; still fresh, and equally good news from one generation to another. Had not the Virgin borne this Son, we must say, all of us, "Good for us we had not been born."

Now, that so many ages were run by, before his coming, HIS will, who chose that point of time, is sufficient reason. But, 1st. We may perceive by this, that the faith of the church and people of God was exercised in the expectance of this promised seed, in whom all the nations should be blessed.

2dly. And the esteem of this rich gift raised (and well did he deserve to be) the desire and hope of the nations. Thus the Lord hath been pleased, in other great favors, to use this way to reveal them in the promise long time before the performance; so, a son to Abraham, and the deliverance from Egypt, and that other from Babylon long before the captivity.

3dly. He was equally from the beginning, in his Father's view, for the interest of believers, in all those preceding ages, as if he had already lived and died and rose again, *A Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*; for he sees through all generations and successions of times, and all things in them are always alike present to his eye. But in the meantime, while the church was held in prefiguring shadows, this was their grand desire, that he might appear in the flesh; still looking and waiting when the day should break, and the shadows flee away. And thus in the Song of Solomon may we take that wish (ch. viii. 1), *Oh! that thou wast as my brother!* And though the time seemed long, yet *the vision was for the set time*, and then it spake, and lied not; and he was coming forward in the succession of time, *haste-*

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*ing as a roe on the mountains*, skipping from one age, from one hill to another: as here we have it, *Abraham begat Isaac, Isaac begat Jacob*, &c. And this is now the great wish of his spouse, the church, and of each particular soul espoused to him, that he would come again as he hath promised; and he will do so. What a sweet echo there (Rev. xxii. 17) of *Come!* The Spirit says *Come*, and the Bride says *Come;* and he says (ver. 20), *Behold I come quickly;* and they resound again, *Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus!*

Ver. 21. *But thou shalt call his name Jesus.*] That is the name that refreshes the fainting spirits of humbled sinners, that the sweet-smelling balm, that the ointment poured out, that draws the virgins to love him; sweet in the mouth and in the ear, and life in the heart. *A Savior, for he shall save his people from their sins.* The Jews were his people once in a particular way; but all Jews and Gentiles that run unto his name as their refuge, are his people, and he hath engaged himself to be their Savior, whatsoever kind of people they be, and whatsoever kind of guiltiness of sins they bring with them. And for that reason, as is observed, are named in this his genealogy, persons grossly stained, and the woman too (ver. 3) is specified, all under the same blot; and one a stranger, not of the seed of the Jews; signifying him to be a Savior of all nations, and even of the vilest sinners. But we know not his riches and our own poverty; therefore we run not to him. We perceive not that we are lost and perishing; therefore a Savior is a word of little relish. Oh, were we convinced of the huge mass of guilt that lies upon us, and the wrath that for it hangs over us, ready to fall on us and sink us, this would be our continual thought, till we were resolved in it, "Is this Savior mine?" And to the end we might find him so, we should tread upon all that lies in our way to run to him.

## CHAPTER II.

VER. 1. Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

VER. 2. Saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

THE blessed Son now born hath for part of his name, in the prophet foretelling, or rather telling his birth (Isa. ix. 6) *Wonderful*. He is so in his birth; that we have seen in the former chapter. He is so in his life and death, particularly in that part of his life which is ordinarily scarce at all remarkable, his infancy. The history of that we have in this chapter. So, as in that place of the prophet, *wonderful* is the beginning of his name, he is *wonderful* in the beginning of his life.

That wonder that goes along throughout all his life and death, is, in the passages here recorded, very legible, a strong contemperature of majesty and meanness: yea, these two, so far distant in notion, yet meet in him, the meanness of man and the majesty of God. So obscurely born and so poorly lodged, yet, that birth marked, and that lodging pointed out, by a star that seems to have no other work nor motion, but to tell of him and lead to him; and by it wise men are led from afar, to offer rich presents to a poor babe, and to do homage to him as a king and to worship him!

Then, afterward he is put to flee for his life in his swaddling clothes. He who came to give life to dead man, is in hazard of a cruel death at the entry of his life, and escapes it by the obscure and hasty flight of his parents with him; yet, even in that flight there is a track of majesty, that they flee, stay, and return with him, all upon Divine warnings. Thus was this *Son of Righteousness* veiled and clouded in human flesh, and a low kind of human life, and yet some rays of Deity are still breaking through and telling, *here dwells the Godhead bodily.*

In this chapter, these two things of him are remarkable. First, He is marvellously witnessed and worshipped. Secondly, persecuted and preserved.

He is witnessed, 1st, By a star stirring up strangers from far, to seek him, and leading them to find him.

2dly, By those strangers coming and declaring this to be their errand, and inquiring after the place of his birth.

3dly, By the chief priests and scribes, from a clear prophecy, resolving them.

Of these, and other like points in the following history, what questions are moved more curious than useful, I shall either pass wholly in silence, or only name them to pass them, to put them out of our way, that they may not stop us in what may be useful. And textual difficulties that call for clearing, I shall endeavor to open with as much briefness as may well consist with clearness, and to serve for that end of clearing them. For this star, what shall we see the better into the end and person whom it served, by deciding, if we could, much less by debating what we can not decide, whether it was a star or a comet? Called a star for its resemblance, as the Scripture often gives things the vulgar names, it seems to have been temporary, and made for this singular service only. However, it was a star that led to the sun.

After men have pleased themselves in the employ of all their reading and wit, to find what the Magi were, further than the text comes, they can assuredly inform us nothing. They were Magi (wise men), and of the east; but whether from Chaldea, or Persia, or Arabia, neither that name they bear, nor the presents they bring, can certainly conclude. It can not be denied, that all these nations called their astrologers, and general-

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ly their philosophers, by that name; and they might bring the same presents from any of those, and from divers other eastern countries: nor is there any more evidence that they were Balaam's posterity, or of his school, though the prophecy of a star arising in Jacob seems to suit somewhat well with this kind of notice given them by a star, and with their observing it, and following it. And truly, besides the uncertainty, the inutility of this may save us a labor; for what shall we be really the wiser, to know particularly what these wise men were, or whence they were? Sure I am, to make them three to fit their number to their presents, and to make kings of them, and give them names, and then to wrangle about their burial-place, is to play the fool about the wise men.

If you ask, how the star could speak this, that there was a great king born, and born in Judea, and speak it so as to persuade them to come and see? I conceive, all their skill in astronomy, and Balaam's prophecy of the star in Jacob, and the tradition of the Messiah, and his star, and sybils prophesying of them, could not make the language of this star thus clear and intelligible to them. There was, no doubt, an extraordinary darting in of a higher light into their minds, clearer than that of the star, to make its meaning clear to them, and to draw them forth to this journey. The star appeared to them in the east, but it does not appear that it led them all the way, though commonly it be so conceived: on the contrary, after their setting forth, it seems not to have appeared to them till they came from Jerusalem, whither they went as likeliest either to find him they sought, or notice of him at least. And this likewise was by a Divine hand ordered, that both there they might give testimony of Christ, and likewise receive their further testimony of him and address to him, and be confirmed in their persuasions concerning him, and then seasonably the star appears to establish and lead them.

Ver. 3. *When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled.*] The wise men's question occasions Herod's fear, and that, the meeting of the priests and scribes to resolve it. They do it from the prophet Micah, ch. v. 2. The difference in the cited words is really none, *Bethlehem Ephrata*, and *Bethlehem Judah*, being all one. And the prophet's words, read interrogatively (as well they may), are clearly the same thing with the evangelist's narrative. However the least of all in itself, yet, it was not the least, but the greatest, by this great King's being born in it. And so, David bears the type of his Son and Lord, for he was of obscure birth in this same city.

Ver. 7–12. *Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men——sent them to Bethlehem.*] The wise men, thus answered and led, came to Bethlehem, and are now so confirmed of the royalty of this child, that they are not removed from that persuasion, nor at all staggered in it, by the sight of so much outward meanness as they found: a poor babe in a common inn; whether still in the manger or no, is not certain, so it may be; however, doubtless, in a very low condition, far from royal grandeur, but yet so high in his own dignity and in their thoughts, that they fell down and worshipped, and offered their present, which they did not to Herod in all his pomp. This many ancient and modern are pleased to subtilize into mysteries, which, though I dare not confidently deny all, yet dare I aver nothing. He that brought them forth, directed them directly home, having no more business at Jerusalem. When they had found the king they came to seek, they left king Herod to seek his intelligence from others.

Ver. 13–23. But these were strange news to Herod—*a born king of the Jews.* The common fears that are of the ill genius of tyrants, and that are the fell revenge of the many fears they cause to so many others, are now raised, and rage within him upon this report. And for all his craft, and the growth of it for cruelties upon long practice, yet is he, as it were, so thunderstruck with this fear, that he can not resolve on any sure way for this end, but inquires the age of the child, and it seems, defers a good time, and smothers the intended massacre (for that answers best the doubt about the age of two years), and then sends and kills all the children of or under that age: that was the sacrifice which in his inquiry he meant to offer, instead of worshipping the child born. His royal Father could have preserved him otherwise than by the care and flight of his supposed father with him; but thus he pleased, even in this, to carry on his divine Son under the covert of such human and humble ways of preservation, to make him in all things like us (sin excepted), and to sweeten those things to us, when we are called to be like him in them, in being persecuted, and by persecution forced to flee.

That text, ver. 15, *Out of Egypt have I called my Son*, suits most fitly, the words having (as other such adapted places) their prophetical aspect to Jesus Christ, without any prejudice of their first proper sense, in persons or things typifying him. Israel is called the Lord's *son*, and his *first born*, Ex. iv. 22; Jer. xxxi. 9.

The other text, *He shall be called a Nazarite*, I rather think, signifies his singular holiness, which the name imports, and all the prophets foretold of him, and the legal Nazarites prefigured, than that it relates to any particular prophecy. Besides, it is in the text *the prophets*, in general: *Which was spoken by the prophets.* Ver. 23.

Observe 1. The freedom of God's calling and drawing men unto his Son; that it follows not the track of human appearances and external engagements. Strangers are brought

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from far to worship Christ, and are glad at his birth. His own, among whom, and those particularly for whom, he was born, were not rejoiced, yea, were troubled at it; so far were they from receiving him as their king, and worshipping him. And strange, that having resolved the Magi's question, they all sit still, for anything we find, and not one is so taken with it, as to take share of the small latter end of their long journey, and to go some miles off, to see so great and matchless a wonder! Thus, many who are far off in their ways, are humbled and brought to Christ, and those who in external profession seemed always near to him, are still far off; *nearest the church* (as ye say) *farthest from God.* My brethren, rest not on your outward relations, your interest in the ordinances and profession of religion, but see how your hearts stand affected toward Jesus Christ. If you receive him as king, then shall ye partake of the sweet fruits of his kingdom.

Obs. 2. There was some appearance of reason (though, indeed, reasonless) that Herod should be stirred with the news of a newborn king; for though Christ's office never wrongs the just power of kings, yet, the jealousy of it will never be out of their minds, while they are not acquainted with him: they will still think that his kingdom encroaches upon theirs; and this is the ground of their almost general enmity against him. But why were the Jews troubled, who could not but apprehend, according to the very notion of the Messiah, that if this was he, he was come for their deliverance and release from the tyranny of foreign power? Yet, they with Herod are troubled. The reason seems to be, they feared that trouble and war would arise by this appearing, and they might possibly foresee much in the way to the change, and therefore would rather have chosen to lie still under the burden of the Roman power. There is a natural prejudice in all against the kingdom of Christ, that it brings disturbance and disquiet with it, and therefore men would rather sleep in their chains than hear of a deliverance by him. Thus, the Jews in Egypt appear to have been prejudiced against the message of their going forth, which Moses brought them. Thus, a carnal heart would comply with its bondage, rather than be at any pains in the remove from it.

Obs. 3. Was the birth of Christ subject to accompanying trouble? Thus it is in the soul, a tumult as it were, of Herod and the Jews. They that are without, viz., carnal friends, all in a rage at it: "What! turn a melancholy, precise fool, go mad," &c. And within, like the tumultuous multitude, all the lusts of the heart are clamoring for their interest, noising to it, that it will suffer much in this change, that all wonted delights will be cut off, that there will arise much war and trouble by this new kingdom; besides many other doubts and fears that arise in this matter. Think it not strange to find it thus, that the soul is tossed with disquiet at the birth of Christ in it; but rather let it rejoice in this trouble, as a sign of that blessed birth, and that spiritual kingdom of Christ within it, which, however it occasion some present stir, shall sweetly compensate that, and compose the soul, and make it happy: for the *Child born* is *the Prince of Peace* (Isa. ix. 6), and the proper nature of his kingdom, that whereof it is made up, is, *righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.* Rom. xiv. 17.

Obs. 4. Herod's fear and anger against this news gathers the priests and scribes together, to give clear testimony from the Scriptures of that very birth which was so hateful to him, and to verify it by the true designment of the place. Thus all his enemies' practices still prove, in the issue, of service to him; all all their stirrings against his kingdom and glory make for it. When all is reckoned, it is found in effect that they undo themselves, and advance his end whom they oppose.

Obs. 5. *Bring me word, that I may come and worship him.* Ver. 8. This is an old piece of king-craft, we see, older than Machiavel, to serve themselves of the shadow and mask of religion, in order to walk unseen in their atheism. The most of them in their wars and confederacies pretending religion, and intending the subversion of it, would seem to come to worship, and come indeed to worry. *Cultum pretendit, cultrum intendit.*

Obs. 6. Though Herod and the priests were both enemies, yet they concur to this testimony, and furnish it to the inquiring strangers, but went not with them, nor so much as sent any. Thus many testify, yea, teach the truth of Christ in the general, yet go not to him, as signs in the way direct others, and stir not themselves. But, my brethren, think it not enough to give a general assent to divine truths, for unless the heart be warmed with them, and the soul stirred up to seek an interest in them, they save not, yea, they more deeply condemn.

Obs. 7. Divers readings of the evangelists and prophets, agreeing in one sense, are very useful. Bethlehem *the least*, yet, *not the least;* the least of thyself, but the greatest by the birth of the great king born in thee. Thus all are raised and ennobled by Christ. The poorest persons, and things in themselves most despicable, yet, through him, become most excellent. The simplicity of the ordinances, the word and sacraments, so far below the pomp of the world, and gaudy, false worship, in outward visage, yet are much further above them in inward dignity. Thus, the soul of a poor, simple, unlettered believer, that is the meanest and least in itself, far below the greatest persons and great wits of the world in naturals, yet, Jesus Christ being born in it, is not the least, but in spiritual ex-

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cellency truly great, and far beyond all others void of Christ.

Obs. 8. Christ newly born, is hotly persecuted, put to flight, &c. This is a presage of his after condition and entertainment in the world in his own person, and still in his body, his Church, the saints. No sooner is Christ born in thee, than the wicked will be upon thee, seeking to kill him with persecuting malice, with scoffs and taunts at the least.

Obs. 9. All his notions are by divine direction. Thus, his saints in all times, particularly in times of straits and troubles, must still be depending on his pointing out of every step, and are safe in following that.

Further, we may observe, that they whom the Father intends to bring to the Son, shall not want means of their calling and leading to him. He will create a light in them, and cause it to arise in their hearts to stir them up to inquire after him. And when they need direction, and seek it, he will furnish it even where it would be least expected. If they be driven to attend it at their hands who go not to Christ themselves, even under a ministry that hath little life in it,—that is formal and spiritless in itself, yet, if God hath cast thy lot there, even there, I say, shall a soul seeking after Jesus Christ find direction and confirmation, and the word shall be made lively to it by a higher hand; and though they go not to Christ, yet shall they give thee his true address, and direct thee right to him, as here the scribes and priests did these inquirers.

Again, observe how God takes hold of men by suitable ways. His call does not lie wholly in the congruity of the means, but he makes it effectual; yet, he carries that efficacy so sweetly, that there is not any violence at all. Often in the means, that sweetness consists in the particular aptness of them. These were star-gazers, and he gives them notice according to their faculty by a star. Thus, some are taken with some accessory qualification of a minister, baited by this to give ear and take liking to his doctrine. Thus, St. Augustine confesses he was caught in hearing St. Ambrose, through delight in his eloquence; for though he looked no farther, yet, together with the words he loved, the things that he loved not did likewise slide in and gain upon him. Again, they undertake a long and hard journey, and resolve to go on, and, missing him at Jerusalem, they inquire there concerning him, and will not leave off till they find him. A soul that hath once seen a light pointing out Christ to it, and stirring it up to seek after him, will not be driven back, nor called off from going to him, by any discouragements and difficultics: yea, they sharpen it, and set an edge on it, and make them so much the more earnest. Others can speak of him, and lie still, and not stir to go to him, as here the priests; but such a soul must have him, and will not take rest without him; will still inquire where he is, where and how I may find my Christ. A man may possibly meet with some formal minister, that knows little of Christ, and loves him less, who yet can tell such an inquirer, that by believing he shall find him, and instruct him somewhat about the notion of faith, and inseparable repentance, and leaving off sin, which things he himself, who directs, makes no use of, hath no experience of at all: yet may his information be useful to the soul seeking Christ, and in following them it may find him. And as it is in the first inquiry and journey to Christ, so, in after seeking, upon his withdrawments: as Cant. iii. and v. Though the watchman that should direct thee deride and mock thee, yea, though they smite and wound thee, yet, if once thou hast found the sweetness of his love, or but heard his voice speaking to thy heart, and desiring it to open to him, thou wilt not leave off thy search day or night, till thou hast found him, in how mean a condition and outward appearance soever: thou wilt see through that, and behold him thy king, thy beloved Lord, and see him beautiful, all beauty and loveliness, and wilt be forced to declare him so, that he outvies all creature loves, as not worthy to be compared: yea, that their enjoyments have not near so much sweetness as the very seekings and mournings after Jesus Christ.

Ver. 11. *Fell down and worshipped him.*] When a soul is busy asking after Jesus Christ, if it be inquired what would you do with him, Why this is my purpose, will it say, I would worship him. I would not only be saved by him, but I would fall down and adore him, and acknowledge him my king; and if I had anything better than another, I would offer it him.' But what hast thou? Hast thou rich presents for him? Alas! no. These are called wise men, and were, it seems, rich; had rich gifts. I am a foolish and a poor creature, and I have nothing to offer.—Nothing. Hast thou a heart? Yes: a heart I have; but, alas! there can be nothing more unfit for him, and unworthy of him: it is dark, and foul, and hard, all disorder and filthiness. Yet, wilt thou give it him as it is, and be willing that he use and dispose of it as it pleases him? Oh, that he would accept of it, that he would take it upon any terms! Here it is: if it would fly out from this offer, I would he would lay hold of it.—Oh! that it were once received by him, that it were in his hand; and then let him do with it what seems him good. Sayest thou so? Then it is done. Give it really and freely, and he will take, and make it better at its worst, than all the gold, and frankincense, and myrrh of all those rich countries where they abound, and will purify, rectify, and make it quite another thing than it is. And it shall never repent thee to have made a gift of it to him. He shall frame it to his own likeness, and in return will give thee himself, and be thine for ever.

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## CHAPTER III.

ALTHOUGH the enemies of Jesus Christ, and, for a time, even his friends and followers, mistook the nature of his kingdom, yet he is a king. This being questioned, he himself avowed it before the Roman judge; and even in his low estate on earth, yet were there intermixed signs and characters of royalty. To instance here no more, the former chapter hath the history of one of them, and this of another. In that was the homage done to him a little after his entering into the world by birth. In this, we have his harbinger preparing his way a little before his coming forth into the world, to manifest himself in his words and works.

This chapter, you see, contains the history of John Baptist—1st. The nature of his office; 2dly. The exercise of his office; and that both generally to the multitude of the Jews that resorted to his baptism, and particularly to some of more eminent note among them, the Pharisees and Sadducees, and singularly on the person of Jesus Christ.

Ver. 1. *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea.*] This relates not to the history that goes before, but to that which follows to be recorded, as the usual style of the Hebrew bears. It is clear that many years fell between even the greatest part both of Christ's life, and of John Baptist's; in both which, from the birth to the coming forth to preach, all the intervening time is past over in silence, not only here, but in all the other evangelists, saving one act of Christ's appearing in public about the age of twelve years, recorded by St. Luke, which was but a glance of this jewel, that lay locked up a long time after.

John the Baptist, an extraordinary person in his birth and calling, holy from the womb, *a prophet, and more than a prophet;* and Jesus Christ himself far more than he, his Lord and Master, the Prince of prophets; and yet, neither of them came abroad in his ministry till about the age of thirty years, the time specified in the law for the service of the house of God. But our ignorance makes us bold and foolhardy; we rush forward not knowing ourselves nor this calling, its excellency and holiness, and our meanness and unholiness. This I say, not that I think measure doth punctually and literally tie us, especially the necessity of some times and the scarcity of faithful laborers being considered, upon which some may lawfully, yea, ought to be drawn forth, if unwilling and yet able.

But surely, the consideration of these examples should give a due check and curb to our usual precipitate hearts, which in these times have need of some restraint, even in some who possibly have some competency both of abilities and true piety. Good fruit may be plucked too green, which, let alone awhile to ripen, would prove much more pleasant and profitable.

In these two, their long lying hid is so much the more remarkable, inasmuch as besides their singular fitness for appearing much sooner, they had so short a time allotted for their course; the forerunner but about one year, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself but about three years and a half. But this was the assigned time in the Divine wisdom, which was found sufficient for the work committed to them; and what needs more? Let not any grudge for themselves, or for any other, their speedy removal, upon this conceit, that they might, in nature's course, continue much longer, and in appearance, through their labor be still more serviceable. Let all rather study for themselves, and wish unto others, that they my be diligent in their work while their day lasts, be it short or long, faithful and fruitful in their generation, and the shorter their day is like to be, work the faster; for certainly the good of life is not in the length of it, but in the use of it.

There are between our Savior and this his messenger or forerunner, divers notable agreements: their being near of kindred; their births taking place in one year, and both foretold by an angel; and as Christ was the son of a virgin, John the son of aged parents, and a mother so long barren: little odds in the time of both their appearing to the world, and abiding in it; both sealing their doctrine with their blood. But as in these, in all, the Lord hath the pre-eminence beyond his servant, so this faithful servant did always most willingly acknowledge it, yea, his very business was to abase himself and exalt his master; and this he did, as we find throughout his history. And those of the servants of Christ that are most honored to be nearest him, are always the greatest abasers of themselves, the most desirous to have him honored.

John's office, we have briefly expressed in the first verse, partly in his name John Baptist, a minister of baptism, and partly in the word joined with it, preaching. Preaching of the word was joined with baptism: *John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness.*

I will not here speak of the nature of baptism, the combinement of preaching with it; their aspect each to the other, and concurrence to one excellent end; the word unfolding the sacrament, and the sacrament sealing the word; the word, as a light, informing and clearing the sense of the seal, and it again, as a seal, confirming and ratifying the truth of the word: as you see some significant seals or signets engraven, have a word about them expressing their sense.

But truly, the word is a light, and the sacraments have in them of the same light illuminating them; and this of baptism, the ancients do particularly express by light. Yet are they both nothing but darkness to us, till the same light shine in our hearts: for till then, we are nothing but darkness ourselves, and therefore the most luminous things are



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so to us: noonday is as midnight to a blind man. And we use these ordinances, the word and the sacrament, without profit and comfort for the most part, because we have not of that Divine light within us; and we have it not, because we ask it not, are not often there where it is to be had, nor earnest suiters for it: for we have his word that can not fail, that our Heavenly Father will give even this choice gift, this light (for that is it), his *Holy Spirit to them that ask it.* Then would word and sacrament be sweet to us, which now are so lifeless and unsavory.

Ver. 2. We have in the following words the sum of his doctrine: *Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* In the point of time and the way of his ministry, he was indeed singular; yet, the substance of his doctrine is the same with those that went before, and those that came after him. All the prophets preached repentance, and joined in the prediction of this kingdom of God; and our Savior himself, and his disciples, as you will after find, preached not only this same doctrine, but even in the same words: only this he had particular, that he stood between the two, as it were, *the link of law and gospel*, as one calls him, and was the first that said, *The kingdom of God is at hand*, and pointed it out as come while he was speaking.

*Repent.*] This is the main purport and end of God's messages to man in all times, by all whom he hath sent (as has been already said), prophets, apostles, Jesus Christ and his forerunner; and still, all his ministers under the gospel, have no other in effect to say, than to call men to repentance, to bring them home to God. Man is naturally turned away from God, and is still further running away and hastening to the pit; and God is calling after him, Do not destroy yourselves, I will receive and pardon you; *Oh! return; why will ye die?* And yet, men will not hearken, but run to their ruin. This word is daily preached; and yet who almost is persuaded so much as to stop his course a little and consider what is propounded to him, much less to break off his course and return? Oh, the bountifulness and graciousness of God, who thus entreats, and still entreats base worms, whom he might tread on and crush in a moment! Oh, the wretchedness and madness of man who refuses, and still refuses those gracious entreaties! You have been called to in these terms, and where are they that return? Where are hearts breaking for their iniquities; and breaking away from them, mourning after the Lord, and longing for a look of his countenance, and desiring nothing else? Oh! that some soul might now be stirred up, and set but upon thoughts of repenting, serious, real thoughts that would not die! The Lord will reach forth his hand and draw it to himself, though it find it can not stir: yea, in that very desire of returning to him, he hath prevented it and touched it, and will not lose it, will not suffer it, and his begun work in it, to perish.

*For the kingdom of heaven.*] Ay, this is the attractive, that which puts life and hope into the soul. Jesus Christ, peace and reconcilement in him to God—this is *the kingdom of heaven.* And here it was *at hand*, and it came, and was published through the world. And throughout all ages of it, the gospel is *at hand*, in the gracious offers of it to all that hear the word; and it is brought into the souls that believingly receive the word, and Jesus Christ revealed in it. This gives both hope to the sinner, and stirs up desires. Were there not a way of receiving him, it were in vain to call men to return; but seeing there is a ransom found—seeing the way is opened up—who is there that have eyes opened to behold that mercy, that will delay any longer? that will not hasten into it, and lay hold upon it?

The gospel is not a doctrine of licentiousness, but the pure and sweet word of that new life which is in Christ. And though in the notion of repentance, there is an aspect to, and use of the law, convincing of sin and death, and working a sense of misery and sorrow from that sense, yet all this it works most sweetly and kindly, contempered with and adapted by, the doctrine of the gospel; for in this they mix and agree, and throughout all the Scriptures of both Testaments, run combined, as they do in the words of the sermon here. For this is the sum of the law and the gospel as they now stand to us-ward; *Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* Nothing is so powerful as the doctrine of free grace to convert a soul, not excluding convincements of sin by the law, but so including them that *that* deadly, killing sentence, thus prepared, becomes excellently medicinal (as the treats that are made of viper's flesh; the law, in regard of condemning power, being now dead, and not only dead, but so qualified by the cordial promises of the gospel, that it does not really condemn, but only shows condemnation out of Christ, and so causes the soul to close with Christ, and find salvation and life with him: as the dead viper's flesh, so compounded, hath a secret virtue to advance the working of those ingredients that are in the composition against poison.

*For the kingdom*, &c.] This is the logic and rhetoric of the Scripture, to persuade holiness and repentance by the grace and pardon revealed in the gospel. Those beams of love and free mercy are most powerful to melt the heart. Now, says he, the great Messias is at hand. He is come: whatsoever have been men's ways before, now they may come home unto God in him. And will not they, seeing he is come from heaven to save? Will they not come from the way of hell, from sin, to be saved by him? And thus the Lord Jesus is daily set before us, and, in him, free forgiveness of all that is

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past; and if men will perish in multitudes, they must perish; but you that have a mind to live, come to him.

Ver. 3. *For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias.*] His calling is further expressed and confirmed by a prophecy of him, designating him by the nature of a *voice, The voice of one crying in the wilderness;* and his cry is, *Prepare the ye way of the Lord*, &c., which suits well with the foregoing sum of his preaching, is in effect the same with it. *Repent* is, *prepare the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight.* Repentance levels the heart to God, makes it a plain for Christ to walk in, casts down the mountains of pride, and raises the soul from base, low, earthly ways and affections, smooths the rugged passions, and straightens the crooked deceit of the heart, makes it sincere and straight both toward God and man. And then the reason, *The kingdom of God is at hand*, is implied in that, *Prepare his way;* that says, He is coming, is upon his way, and therefore sends his harbinger to make it fit for him. And this is our business, to be dealing with our hearts, levelling, smoothing, and straightening them for our Lord, that he may take delight to dwell and walk in them, and refresh them with his presence; and, certainly, the more holy diligence is used in suiting the heart to his holy will, the more of his sweet presence shall we enjoy.

Ver. 4. *And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair.*] He is further described from his habit and course of life, suiting the nature of his calling, and the strain of his preaching. A preacher of repentance, not willingly resorting to courts and cities, but keeping in the wilderness; that was, not a place altogether uninhabited, but a less peopled, mountainous soil, the very place of his birth; who had his habit and diet like the place, and like the employment. Though his solitude and rough garments are a slender hold for the hermetical way magnified in the Romish church, when that of Zechariah fits better, and their clothes are sooner shaped to that pattern, where he speaks of those false tongues that *wear a rough garment to deceive*, Zech. xiii. 4—yet certainly, besides somewhat extraordinary and singular in him and his calling, to which this was consonant, there is this for the example of all the messengers of God, to live as much as may be in their condition and station, disengaged from the world, not following the vain delights and ways of it; not bathing in the solaces and pleasures of earth, and entangling themselves in the cares of it, but, sober, and modest, and mortified in their way of living; making it their main business not to please the flesh, but to do service to their Lord, to walk in his ways, and *prepare his way* for him in the hearts of his people. Further, this was implied in this mean way of life, that the less of human grandeur, the more of Divine power, and of the majesty of God, might appear in his ministry.

Ver. 5. *Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan.*] That is, great multitudes flocked to him, to hear him, and be baptized. For though baptism, in the way he used it, was not usual, yet their accustomed use of legal worship made it the less strange, and the more acceptable to them. And being accompanied with the doctrine of repentance, remission of sins, and the news of the kingdom of heaven approaching, it could not choose but find some reverence and attention. But certainly, of multitudes that will run to the word, and, possibly, particularly flock after the ministry of some for a time, there may be many, as doubtless were there, that are but light stuff, carried with the stream as corks and straws are. Men should examine well even such things as seem to speak some love to religion in them, whether they be real or not. This, John does not spare to tell home to the seemingly best of those that came to him, that esteemed themselves, and were esteemed by others, more religious than the multitude. Yea, the Spirit of God directed him to deal more sharply with them than with others that came to him; they being of all others commonly most confident of self-righteousness, and therefore farthest from the true work of repentance, which humbles the soul to the dust, and lays it low in its own eyes: these sects being, beyond the multitude, swelled with conceit of their own estate, he spares the rest, and pricks them sharply, that the tumor may fall. It may seem somewhat strange that he entertains so roughly those that came respectfully to him, and with others were willing and desirous to hear his doctrine, and partake of his baptism. Was not this the way to beat them back, and make them distaste both?

There is, indeed, much prudence required in the ministers of the word, to know to attemper their admonitions and reproofs, that by too much rigor they discourage not weak beginners who are inquiring after the ways of God; but withal they should be no less wary that by too much credulity and lenity they sooth not any in their formality and carnal confidence. And the most we have to deal withal, commonly are in most hazard upon this hand; there is too little heart-humbling. And many are ready to take up some piece of reformation of their ways, and the externals of religion, and deem themselves presently good Christians. Oh! the deceit and slothfulness of our hearts! How ready are we to lay hold upon an easy guise of our own, and think what some further press, is but melancholy and needless preciseness!

Ver. 8. *Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.*] Though he wonders at their coming, and fairly tells them so, yet he rejects them not, despairs not of them; he gives them sound advice, which implies always some hopes of prevailing. Give none up for desperate; catch hold of what they do, to drive

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them to what further they ought to do. You profess to *flee from the wrath to come; bring forth fruits then.* You say you are Christians and believers: Oh! let your ways and lives say so. Let Christ dwell in your hearts, and be shown in your lives.

Ver. 9. *Think not to say, We have Abraham to our father.*] The foolish heart is still leaning to this fancy of external relations and privileges. Beware; rest not on these—the reformed religion, pure ordinances, or a place of esteem possibly among the strictest sort of reformed professors. And do not think you put an obligation on religion, and that it is indebted to you; but pray take heed. God can leave you, and deliver you up to these vain thoughts, and provide himself without you. He can draw the remotest and unlikeliest to himself, and let you go.

Ver. 10. And this is a sifting, trying time. He comes, who will unmask your hypocrisies, and search you to the bottom; *who will lay his axe to the root of the trees*, and cut up the fruitless. Where the gospel comes in greatest power, there is the certainest, and saddest weight of judgment on the unbelieving and impenitent, the formal and fruitless.

Ver. 11. *I indeed baptize you with water.*] The true badge of a messenger of Jesus Christ is, to abase himself and to magnify his master. *Baptism with the Holy Ghost, and with fire*, may, possibly, have some aspect to the singular sending of the Holy Ghost in fiery tongues. That purifying virtue, that flame of love, oh, that we found it!

Ver. 12. And only they, *the wheat*, are for *the garner*, they that are pure and spiritual: *the chaff*, light and vain hearts, are fuel for the fire. No middle class: we must be either baptized in that fire, or burnt in this.

Ver. 13–15. In the baptism of Christ, observe the exemplary humility both of the master and of the servant: of the master, in subjecting himself to this ordinance; of the servant in administering it, first, in his modest question and declining it, and secondly, in his quiet yielding and obedience. He that was so pure and spotless, had no need of that, or any other washing; *He, the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world*, as this John testified; *He, the fountain opened for sin and iniquity*, and therefore, well says he, *I have need of thy baptism.* Yet here he humbles himself to be baptized. Oh! that we who are baptized had more of his likeness in this humble reverence for Divine ordinances, looking on them as his in every warranted hand. What though he that teaches be less knowing and less spiritual than thou that hearest, one that might rather learn of thee, yet the appointment of God obliges thee to attend as humbly and regardfully to his ministry as if he were an angel.

John recoils a little. Thus truly, as he in regard to the person, so will every humbled, self-knowing minister, even in reference to the ordinances themselves, wonder often, and be sometimes at the point of forbearing. Oh! who am I, to handle such holy things, to stand in so high a service, to convey life, I that am dead! to administer so high, so pure and purifying ordinances, myself so impure! But again, being commanded and engaged of God's own hand, that overcomes and silences; and in the continuing in the work upon that consideration, there is no less, yea, the greater humility, than in the other thoughts of unfitness; a submissive resignation of a man to his Lord. However the matter seem to me, and truly I deem myself unworthy of the lowest employment without thee, yet, thou appointing, I have no more to say: good reason thy will stand, and not mine.

Ver. 16, 17. Now, in the baptism, the humility of both is richly rewarded with so glorious a vision and voice. The thing is mean and low in the common form of it; baptized in the common river. Oh! what transcendent glory in such a manifestation of that blessed Trinity on earth, that is the perpetual wonder and happiness of heaven. Oh, that we had eyes to see it, and that our hearts were more taken with this glance here and the hopes of full vision ere long! *Like a dove.* Oh! that *that* Spirit were more abundant in us, flowing from our *Head*, on whose head it here rested.

*My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*] In this word lies all the comfort of a Christian. No pleasingness, nor acceptance, indeed, out of him; but in him, all acceptance of all who are in him. Nothing delights the Father but in this view. All the world is as nothing in his eye, and all men hateful and abominable by sin. Thou, with all thy good-nature, and good-breeding, and good-carriage, art vile and detestable out of Christ. But if thou get under the robe of Jesus, thou, and all thy guiltiness and vileness, then art thou lovely in the Father's eye. Oh! that we could absolutely take up in him, whatsoever we are, yet shrouded under him! Constant, fixed believing is all. Let not the Father then see us but in the Son, and all is well.

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## CHAPEER IV.

**VER. 1. Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.**

THE apostle doth fitly style our Lord Jesus *the captain*, or leader, *of our salvation.* He marches, leads all the way, puts us on nothing that he hath not first encountered. And in his going before, there is that decorum there marked, Heb. xii. 10: *It was meet he should be made perfect by sufferings.* So particularly by this kind, that is the sharpest sensation, by these he was entered into his calling; initiated or consecrated, as the word there is. Let none, therefore, of his followers think to go free. If you mean to follow

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Christ, reckon for temptations, to meet them even at first, and so in all the way. We readily misreckon, though warned; we count as we would have it; write up such ease and joys, &c., and think not on afflictions without, and temptations within, which yet are much our portion here. Unwise to put to sea and expect no storms, nothing but fair weather! Let this be our warning, that we be not secure; we shall meet temptations. But let this be our comfort, that we be not dismayed; that in this we do follow him. He went before us in this conflict, and overcame before us, and for us; and we likewise, in his strength, shall overcome.

*Then.*—When? Look backward. *Then*—presently after he was baptized, and not simply by the water of Jordan, but by the Spirit from heaven, and was singularly replenished, *full of the Holy Ghost*, as St. Luke hath it, Luke iv. 1. Thus shalt thou be sure to be assaulted when thou hast received the greatest enlargements from heaven, either at the sacrament or in prayer, or in any other way; then look for an onset. This arch-pirate lets the empty ships pass, but lays wait for them when they return richest laden.

*Then.*—Again, Look forward. *Then*—when he was to enter on his work, his public ministry. Thus look to be assailed, when thou art to engage in any special service. Each according to his place will find this: when he is upon some purpose of honoring God in any particular undertaking or course, and is nearest the performance, then shall *the strength* of hell be mustered up against him. Now, knowing it to be thus, this ought rather to embolden than discourage us in any such way. This expert enemy knows his interest well, and does not thus bestir himself lightly, but feels that his kingdom is in danger, and that he shall certainly be a loser.

Now, as this is incident to every Christian, and particularly, according to the eminency of their service, to ministers of Jesus Christ, as here to him when toward entering on his own ministry, so, in this, they should reinforce themselves in him; should follow him on, and apply and employ him for the victory.

*This* [temptation] was one of Luther's schoolmasters, and so it is to all the servants of Christ; and so are all the three, prayer, meditation, and temptation. And this is very needful, that both with the more skill, and with the more compassion, they may be helpful to them that are tempted. Certainly, in all things, experience gives the deepest sense and the readiest faculties. He who was here tempted, could know more by speculation than ever any man; yet it was found meet that even he should be trained by the experience of these things, as in that cited place, Hebrews ii. 10—*perfected* as captain, made a complete commander by hard services, sufferings, and temptations. So Heb. iv. 15, and v. 2–8. Men expert in war, laugh at the learnedest discourse of pedants, as is reported of Hannibal.

Oh! heart-feeling is a main thing in this. It is going to the wrong hand, for a troubled or tempted Christian to go to an untroubled, untempted minister, who never knew what that meant. Their errand takes not: they find little ease in complaining of their grief to him that never felt such a thing; as Nazianzen observes, that they who are stung with a serpent, can not endure to bemoan themselves to any but some that have felt the pain. To have found such trouble, and then an issue, such and such comfort—oh, it enables much in that case. See 2 Cor. i. 4, 6.

*Led by the Spirit.*] That same Spirit that came down on him in baptism, ch. iii., here leads him forth to his conflict, not for this alone, to seek it, but leads for such exercise there, wherein it was designed and appointed to meet him. The Spirit in us doth not carry us wilfully seeking of temptations; yea, we pray by his direction who was thus led, that we may not be *led into temptations;* that is, that we may be so led into them as not to be left to them and foiled in them; but he leads us into those places and employments, when we follow his leading, wherein, by God's disposal, we do meet with temptations. And to be thus led any way whatsoever, is safe, and the issue happy, as here it was. That is sweet in all things, to be carried; not to go of ourselves any way, but that of each step it may be said, *Led by the Spirit.* Led to be tempted, in order that he might return with the glory of the victory.

*Into the wilderness.*] This is the field chosen for this duel between the roaring lion of the bottomless pit and the royal line of the tribe of Judah. This serpent tempted the first Adam in the garden, and the second Adam in the wilderness, with different success indeed; and ever since doth still tempt the posterity of both, in all variety of places and conditions, in several ways suitable. Company and conversation have their temptations; and solitude, even the wilderness, hath its own too. No place or estate on earth is privileged; no business, not lawful laboring, eating and drinking, yea, not fasting and praying; yea, in these are readily the most assaults, but in them likewise the sweetest victory: as here.

Verse 2. *And when he had fasted forty days.*] Though this was a miraculous and extraordinary fast, as a mark of his extraordinary person and calling, and of the ministry of the gospel's harmoniously according with the law and the prophets, Moses and Elias, yet, surely a holy fast it was, wherein our Savior (as those his forerunners, no doubt) fed upon prayer and Divine contemplation.

*He hungered.*] So all along, as in this fast, so, with his following hunger, Divine power combined with human weakness, such as was sinless.

Ver. 3. *If thou be the Son of God.*] Doubtless the tempter was in some doubt himself

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about this: though he saw many concurrent proofs of it, yet thought possibly it might be otherwise, and therefore tries. And as he expresses his own doubt, so he suggests the doubt to our Savior. It is vain to specify these three temptations by three particular sins, for they are each complicated and made up of variety, as usually all sins are. In this I would not exclude something of working on appetite, stirring to an impatient, intemperate haste in satisfying that; and the exception is weak, that it is not delicacies, but bread that is propounded, for that is as strong a temptation in extreme hunger as delicacies; but the main is unbelief, and so making haste. So, in the first temptation of our first parents, the matter of pleasing appetite made some ingredient, but the chief thing was unbelief: *Yea, hath God said?* Gen. iii. 6. And so here, *If thou be the Son of God.* And as that was joined to pride, stirring them to a proud desire to be gods, so, in this case, Satan aims at drawing a needless show of it, that Christ was God. And our Savior's answer meets all these suggestions: that of his pressing hunger, finding another answer for it than bread; that is not the only thing for it; that of doubting or unbelief (as it was the main evil, so the main of the answer stands opposed to it), trusting in the word of God, that is, in his power and effectual support. I need not myself try conclusions to see whether I be the Son of God, nor (which answers the bent of it) need I at this time give a trial that I am the Son of God. So he diverts the satisfying him in that point of his Godhead, and answers only for a man: *Man shall not live upon bread alone*, &c.

The second and third temptations, whether they were by change of place, or representation of species, as I think it can not be forcibly either concluded or refuted either way, so it is not of much benefit or importance that it should be. The motion of throwing him down headlong (though it is not thus urged by any that I remember) seems to me with the strongest appearance to incline to a real standing upon the place: for if not, then it was necessary that both the place and the steepness should not only be represented to our Savior's imagination, but that he should really believe that he was there: otherwise, the temptation of casting himself down thence were altogether null, and could have no place. Nor, though it may be granted that he might suffer a false representation (somewhat of which must likely be allowed, to make up the third temptation, with the advantage of a high mountain), yet, whether we may fairly admit in our Savior an apprehension of such a false representation as true, should be considered.

But leaving that, we find the second temptation to be, clearly, to a presumptuous tempting of God, and the third, to the horridest apostacy from God, even to worshipping of the devil, and that baited with an offer of the world; first to commit idolatry to it, and then next, to himself for it. He is clearly beat off in all; it could not be otherwise. But truly this may seem strange, that Satan durst suggest such horrid, foul notions, to so holy, so singularly holy a man, for that at least he knew him to be, and had strong suspicions that he was more than a man, even the Son of God.

And this I think the sovereign satisfaction of a soul, in the matter of blasphemous injections, which many, even holy persons, are troubled with: much is said to it by many; but surely there is nothing like the view of this instance. That he uses thee so, what wonder! He had the hardiness even to use thy Lord so, who was so high above all stain of sin, as in all things, so in these. True, indeed, we can not well avoid all soil, but some guilt sticks to us; as from the throwing of a dirty ball against the wall, though it is presently beat back, yet it leaves a spot behind; our nature being so easily receptive of sinful defilement. But he was altogether undefileable in all assaults; yet this is our grand comfort, that he was tempted, and even that with such vile things. So, then, if finding any such thing, cry to him for help, as one who can feel it, and entreat him to see how grating these thoughts are to thee, and to pity thee, and repel Satan; and he will do it, and will account those not thy sin at all, but his; and if anything stick, will wash it off with his own blood.

*Observe.* The devil can cite scripture. Receive not, then, everything at first, that comes with an *it is written;* and as not everything of men's opinions thus backed, so, not those doubts that are raised within thee, and managed against thee in this way. How often does Satan make a poor believer at a stand by some scripture objection! But take this course; follow thy Captain in this. Satan is a liar, and cuts and pares when he cites; as he here left out, *thy ways*, to make room for *Cast thyself headlong*, which was not the way. Now our Savior does not contest with him about this, takes no notice of that sleight, but in a plain, full counter-blow, beats him out of it, gives him another *it is written*, that carries clear how he abused his. And there is admirable wisdom in this, much more than if he had disputed about the word which all observe here, was cunningly left out; for in this, our Savior teaches us our better way in this case, either with perverse men, in the avouching of their errors, or with Satan, in his thus assaulting us with misalleged scripture, not so much to subtilize about the very place or words abused. It may be so cunningly done sometimes, that we can not well find it out; but this downright, sure way beats off the sophister with another place, clearly and plainly carrying that truth which he opposes and we adhere to. So, though thou canst not clear the sense of an obscure scripture, thou shalt always find a sufficient guard in another that is clearer.

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Our Savior was pleased thus to bear many assaults, and thus to fence and beat off the tempter by the word, both for our instruction and comfort, who otherwise, for himself, could immediately have repelled him, and sent him back at first. But indeed he *pleased not himself* in anything; had an eye to us in all he did and suffered, and did all in reference to our advantage. Oh, how should we love him!

And let not any abuse of the Scripture, by Satan or by men, abate our esteem, or lead us to abandon our use of it; but let us study it still, labor to be well acquainted with it, make it our magazine, have ready our defences thence in all kinds of assault. Oh! let this word dwell richly in us, for it is our life. A stone out of this brook smites Goliath. And observing these evils here, labor to be fortified against them. Surely they were main ones, that were brought forth in this combat. Ready we are either to distrust our God, or, in abused confidence, to presume upon unwarranted ways. And, for the third temptation, how strong is it, though not to gain that gross point of disclaiming God for love of the world, yet, how many hearts are secretly and insensibly inveigled and stolen away from him by it, drawn to neglect his worship, or to cold remissness in it, and to follow the ways of the honor, gain, or pleasures of this world, that Satan suggests, and so to worship him and it altogether, instead of the Lord our God, whom alone we are to adore and serve, and whose due is all our heart!

Ver. 10. *Get thee hence, Satan.*] Thus, when anything moves to debauch and draw off the heart from God, it is to be beat away with indignation. And thus in all conflicts, continue fighting in thy Lord's strength: give not over, resist still, and the enemy shall flee, as here.

Ver. 11. *Then the devil leaveth him.*] Retires, indeed, but it was *for a season*, as St. Luke hath it there, ch. iv. 15. So we should still make for new onsets, and not promise ourselves, upon a cessation, perpetual quiet, but rather fortify in those times of breathing. But this know, that our Lord is tender of us, and will allay our painful conflicts with sweet comforts. Let us remember to call our Lord to take him off, and he will not see us surcharged or tempted above what we are able, or he enables us, to bear: and he will refresh us with consolations, strong consolations as we need. And these in a high degree usually follow hard conflicts patiently and stoutly sustained. Our Lord had a cordial draft both before and after this conflict: before, in the last verse of chapter iii., he was confirmed in the very point he was assaulted in: *This is my beloved Son.* And as he was confirmed before, so was he comforted after: *The angels came and ministered to him.* Oh! the sweet issue our Lord gives to many a sad battle of weak Christians, wherein they possibly thought once that it was lost, and that they could never hold out, and come through it. But never think so: we shall come through all, and the day shall be ours.

Ver. 12. *Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee.*] We need not fear. God uses men, but needs them not: when they are restrained or removed, he can provide more. When John is shut up, Jesus comes forth.

Ver. 13. *And leaveth Nazareth.*] Not being honored in his own country. So, commonness of things makes them cheap and low with us, how excellent soever. This disease of lightness and novelty, so natural to us, we have need to watch against.

Ver. 14–16. *That it might be fulfilled,* &c.] Now the prophecy is raised to its higher sense. The relief which the prophet speaks of, in relation to a temporal sense, was but a shadow. This is light indeed, Jesus coming into their coasts; the Sun of righteousness arising. Oh, how pitiful is the condition of those nations that still are in darkness, destitute of his light! How should we pity them! But how much more pitiable their condition, who, in the midst of this light, are still in darkness; it shining in their land, but not in their hearts! These still are under *the shadow of death.* Oh! fear and tremble, you that, in the clear gospel light, are sitting still in your natural darkness of mind and hardness of heart, and still loving that darkness, and refusing this Divine light. Oh! let it in, that you may live, and not pass from darkness to darkness, from inward darkness to utter darkness, where is *nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.*

Ver. 17. *From that time Jesus began to preach.*] So gave he forth light by preaching, showing the way of salvation. And he was eminently, *the light*—he that very way of salvation. He, the Prince and Savior exalted to give repentance, and remission of sins, and the kingdom, yet humbles himself to be the Herald, to proclaim his own gift and pardon. And in humbling himself to this work of preaching, he hath highly exalted it. Shall ever that be accounted low, and fit only for mean persons, which the Lord of glory made his calling and work in the world?

*And to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*] This was said before to be the sermon of his forerunner; not only the same sense, but the very same words. He who needed to borrow from none, but gives all to all, yet disdains not to preach this over after John Baptist. There is certainly a pride and vanity in the minds of men, in that extreme affecting still either to speak or hear new things. Oh, were you called together often, and this said as from God, *Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,* and found obedient, now one heart yielding, and then another, though it might seem poor to vain heads, yet oh, what excellent preaching were it! God's voice more regarded and

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owned, would make that sweet which we often despise.

*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* Oh, sweet invitation, the offer of a pardon to a repenting sinner! but how much more that of a kingdom! He might say, *Repent, for the prison of hell is at hand,* if ye do not; but rather he this way draws, by the happiness and glory attending our return.

*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* And at hand to you, if ye repent, to be yours; grace and all the rich promises of it, and, within a while, full glory. And no more ado; it is *at hand.* Let go your hold of the one, and straight catch hold of the other; it is *at hand.* But who believes this? —If we do, what madness is it not to accept it!

The chapter hath, first, our Savior's preparation to his public calling; secondly, his begun administration of it in all the three parts, preaching of the gospel, calling disciples, and working miracles.

Ver. 18. *And Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren.*] Here we have the calling of two pairs of brethren, both of the same calling, *fishers,* to a higher calling of the same name, *fishers* still, but, *of men:* that is the excellency and dignity of it. Not now to follow out the resemblance, there is much art in this Divine fishing of human souls, both in casting the net in public preaching, and angling in private converse.

Ver. 19. *And they straightway left their nets and followed him.*] This was Elijah's touch to Elisha, *What have I done to thee?* Did our hearts once hear his voice, net would not entangle us; nor cables bind us; no friends, nor parents, nor business, would hold us: we should break from all, yea, if it might be otherwise, would run from all to follow him.

Ver. 23. *And Jesus went about all Galilee.*] Here observe his Divine power and goodness shining forth in the miraculous cure of all diseases. But these bodily cures were but preludes of the main work; but signs hung out to show where the physician of souls dwelt. And whatsoever be thy spiritual maladies, though never so many and so desperate, yet come. Never any came to him and went away uncured.

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## CHAPTER V.

VER. 1. And seeing the multitude, he went up into a mountain. And when he was set, his disciples came unto him.

VER. 2. And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor, &c.

OTHERS may grow stale, but this sermon, never so often read over, is always new. Oh, how full of Divine doctrine! How plain, and yet how high and excellent, delighting the soul as a bright day, clear light all along! We need not strain for the clearness of it upon that word, *He opened his mouth;* for every word here spoken speaks for itself; carries, as light does, its own evidence. He begins with that great point which all are concerned in, and all naturally someway desirous to know, the doctrine of blessedness, in short aphorisms; and the rest of his discourse follows out the same argument, directing the way to happiness in those graces, *purity, meekness, mercy,* &c. For although all grace is radically one, and he that hath one hath all, yet they are thus specified: 1st. For the weakness of our apprehensions, which take not full views so easily, they are spelled out to us, but only so, that taking them the easier severally, as letters of one word, we may set them together again, as all being one *blessedness.* 2dly. Though every true Christian hath all graces, yet all are not alike eminent in all. We may confidently say, that there is no one who equally excels in every grace; but in several persons, several particular graces do most act and evidence themselves, shooting up above the rest; yea, in one and the same person, one grace will, at some times, be more evident and sensible than at others. 3dly. They are thus parcelled out to us, that we may apply ourselves the more particularly sometimes to the study of one, sometimes to the study of another, the neglect whereof is a great cause of our great deficiency in them all. We hear them and like them, may be, and think these are good, but we do not set to the attainment of them: we applaud, and leave them there; approve all, and neglect all. If at any time we have any desires after them, they are general and confused: we grasp at all, and catch nothing.

This I would recommend, to be more particular in our purposes; sometimes to set ourselves to some one grace, not secluding nor turning away the rest, for that can not be, but yet, more particularly plying that one, were it *humility, poverty of spirit, meekness,* or any other; and for some time to make that one our main task, were it for some weeks or months together, and examine every day's practice in that particularly. But like unsettled students among many books, we rove and reel, and make offers at every grace, and still lag behind, and make no considerable purchase nor progression in any.

Now, for blessedness, what is the common voice, at least, of men's minds and practices, though they speak it not out? *Blessed* are the rich, the honorable, the well-landed, or well-befriended, and they that can grow great enough in the world. But if we believe *this* Teacher, it is not these; no such matter. But if blessedness be in things spiritual and inward, then men would imagine readily of those things which sound highest, that have some grandeur, and somewhat heroic in them —in great knowledge of faculty, and zeal for high services, or in raptures, and ecstasies, and singular Divine experiences. But here

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there is nothing of these neither, but the meanest, most despised things; yea, those that (some of them) seem to sound as miserable and sad: *The poor in spirit—they that mourn—the meek*, &c. Oh! sweet, lowly graces, *poverty of spirit, meekness*, that grow low, and are of dark hue, as the violet's, but of a fragrant smell; as one says, chief in garlands: these are prime in the garlands of a Christian. Oh! study these; seek to have them growing within you. Suffering remarkable martyrdom may seem to have some lustre in it; but how take you it, to be reviled and scoffed at, and hated, and taunted, by Christians in name, because thou desirest to be one indeed?

Each of these beatitudes, for all the low sound at first, ends high, and makes good the title. *Blessed are the poor in spirit;* ay, they are the only rich, heirs to a kingdom, and such a kingdom: *theirs is the kingdom of God.* Lofty, vain minds are truly base. By *poverty in spirit*, is meant, I conceive, not only sense of spiritual want (though commonly it is so taken), but, more comprehensively, a lowly frame of heart, not swelled either with desires, or delight, or conceit, of any worldly advantage, or self-excellency, either outward or inward. Thus may a man be, amid very many such advantages and riches, *poor*, and that is his blessing. Yet here is connoted, I perceive, the condition of outward poverty as more suiting, and usually more connected with that temper of spirit. In Luke it is, *Blessed are the poor*, opposed to the rich. And he that is poor in spirit, if outwardly poor, is truly rich in the midst of poverty. So, *they that mourn shall be comforted, and the meek shall inherit the earth.* Not that this is their all, for *theirs is the kingdom of heaven*, also. But this word from the Psalm carries a fit promise, that meekness, seeming to be that which makes a man a prey to every one, and easily wronged and thrust out by all, yet shall be provided and protected, and he shall enjoy so much even of this earth as is fit for him, with more quiet and sweetness than the proud and boisterous, who are ever, almost, in contentions.

*The pure in heart*, abridging themselves of sights and enjoyments that the world seeks after—sensual delights, *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*—shall have a better sight, and purer joy, suiting them; sweetest communion with God here, and, ere long, full vision; *for they shall see God.* So in the rest it is clear.

*Blessed are they which are persecuted——Rejoice.*] Look off from your sufferings, and each way you will find matter of encouragement and joy. Look back to *the prophets that were before you*, and look forward to *the reward in heaven* that is before you. The firm belief of that kingdom, that glory above, that vision, what will it not make easy to forego or undergo, to do or suffer? It is the want of that belief that keeps the low things of this earth so high in our esteem.

Ver. 13, 14. *Ye are the salt of the earth—ye are the light of the world.*] This next point particularly concerns the disciples, and after them, the ministers of Christ. In these resemblances lie their dignity and their duty; and the former is used for urging the latter; and that is the best view of it. Let men look as much as they can upon the excellency of this their high calling, so that it raise their spirits to high endeavors of acting suitably to it. What a simple thing, to feed self-conceit by this! Alas, poor man! He is *light* indeed in another sense, who grows vain upon it that he is called *light*, and does not rather tremble that he is so unlike it in this. *Salt*—what were all table provisions without this? *Light*—what were the world without this? Christ communicates his own name to them. *The light of the world.* All the children of God are children of light, but his messengers more eminently so. Men that think ministers a needless commodity in the world, if they give any belief to the gospel, may see what they are: and if you could live well without salt, and without light, so might ye without ministers.

But, alas! how much unsavory salt, how many dark lights are among us! And if the salt lose its savor, it can do good to nothing, and nothing can do good to it. The most unprofitable piece of the world, is either a profane, a carnal, or a formal, dead minister; he is good for nothing—unsavory salt, of all things the most unsavory. And *if the light within thee be darkness* (as our Savior says afterward), *how great is that darkness!* Oh, that Christ shined more in our labors, in our conversation, and in companies where we come; that we were more savory and seasoning others; not in jestings, or in sports (these salts are unsavory in ministers), but in words of edification, *ministering grace to the hearers!* And this, though it specially applies to ministers, yet extends to all Christians. *Let your light so shine*, not to make yourselves somebody, but for the glory of the *Father of lights*, whence you have the light, *your heavenly Father.* Oh, that this were predominant in all! Happy that heart that is filled with constant desires of this, and that aims at the glory of God, minding self in nothing, but God in all!

Ver. 17. *Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets.*] He lays hold of this, takes occasion, upon clearing a mistake that had arisen respecting him, to pass on to such doctrines as he knew were necessary for the clearing of the law of God, wronged by false glosses; and he thus vindicates both himself and that law whereof he was the lord and author. Some, possibly, to obstruct his way and prejudice him in men's opinions, spake of him as a teacher of new doctrine, and an enemy of the law: others, it may be, hearing of a doctrine that sounded



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new, would willingly have had it so, would have been free, and enjoy libertinism. Now, to dispel both misapprehensions, our Savior owns his purpose to be nothing such. On the contrary, *I come not to destroy*, but *to fulfil*. This did he in all things, in doctrine and in practice; and he declares it a thing impossible for any to annul the law; that if any should offer at it, in his actions or doctrine, he should undo himself, but not the least tittle of the law. Yet, further, these men that cry up the law, and would charge me with the dissolving of it, for all their noise, I declare to you, that except you take heed, and observe that law better than they do, ye can not enter into heaven. How many deceive themselves, as these self-pleasing, vain men did! But be warned. *Except your righteousness*, your religion, go beyond the civil neighbor, the good church-keeper, the formal, painted professor, ye shall fall short of that which both you and they reckon upon. How many, who think themselves fair for heaven, shall find themselves wofully mistaken when it is past help! Oh! examine well in due time, and see whether you are indeed for heaven or not. It is the saddest mistake ever man fell into, to dream on of heaven, till he find himself in hell.

Ver. 21. *Ye have heard, &c.*] Now he clears the law, and teaches the true spiritual sense of it, in divers points of it, wherein it was grossly abused; shows that it binds not only the hand and the tongue, but even the heart. Men aiming at self-righteousness by the law, and desirous of that as cheap as might be, with the least pains, not being willing or able to rise to its perfection, drew it down and shaped it to their imperfection: cut it to the measure of external obedience, and that of the easiest size. Thus men readily do; they rather fancy the word and rules of Christianity to their humors, than purge and correct those humors by the word. This exposition of the sixth commandment, condemns not only gross murder, but rash anger and reviling speech, as a breach of it, and condemnable: which is expressed in allusion to the civil judicatures among the Jews, and thence, in case of any such thing, he presses speedy and undelayed reconcilement, as a thing most acceptable to God, and without which no other homages or religious performances would be acceptable to him. Now it is not only anger without cause that is condemned, but vain, undue anger, exceeding cause and measure. Were there the consciousness and constant regard of this; were every reproachful or disdainful word, every harsh look, every rising angry thought against thy brother looked on as murder, oh, in what order would it put thy tongue, eye, and heart, in this respect! This we hear, and think it should be thus, but we have not resolved that it must be thus, do not watch and pray that it may be so, after an unchaste look and touch of impure desire, though not breaking out to act, yea, though not ripening within to full consent.

And by occasion of this, a man being ready to think, Oh, how strait, how hard is this: he adds, in verse 29, a useful advice, and a powerful encouragement with it. *If thine eye offend thee*—anything that proves a snare, how dear soever, as a right eye, or right hand. Men are loath to pare off or abridge occasions of sin, where some strong interest binds them. But thus to go whole and sound to hell!—Oh! better limp to heaven.

Ver. 31. Then follows of *divorce*, which, upon any any difference, was worn into common use, and opinion of lawfulness. Afterward, he speaks of usual *vain swearing*, a sin which men have always affected, even they who, by profession, are God's own people: at which a man might wonder, did not we find it so lamentably true. But yet, *Swear not at all*, not after the liberty you take by swearing either by heaven or earth, thinking thus you spare God's name; but swearing by them must have relation to God, and so his name is interested. But oh! a little reverence for the great God would would make thee tremble at it. Nothing is stronger evidence of a graceless heart, than oaths and profane swearing.

Lastly, at ver. 43, we have that sweet doctrine of not revenging, but patiently bearing, and readily forgiving of injuries, and loving enemies, and doing good to all. This does not bar any calm way of self-righting, to which there is sometimes an obligation: but men overstretch it, and passion and self-love domineer, under this pretext. Therefore, the words sound a little extreme, as a counter-bowing of our crooked hearts, but it is to bring them straight. Let Julian and other atheists laugh at it, but it is the glory of Christians. No doctrine or religion in the world presses so much clemency and innocency, and bounty as theirs, even to sworn enemies. This, we say, is its glory. And whereas it seems to render men sheepish, to make them less than men, it makes them indeed more than men, even like God. Benignity and mercy are divine and Godlike, chief traits of God's image in his children. His sun rises, and his rain descends on the just and the unjust. So, a diffusive, sweet, bountiful soul, is still desiring to do good, by hand, by counsel, by any comfort within its reach toward all, rewarding good for evil. These things, deeply thought on and really practised, would make Christians indeed, children like their Heavenly Father.

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## CHAPTER VI.

CHRIST'S business upon earth was to bring man to heaven. He came down and became man for that purpose: *came forth from God*, to *bring us back to God*. 1 Pet. iii. 18. As

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his life and death, so his divine doctrine tends to that, to enlighten the minds of men with the right knowledge, and inflame their hearts with the real love, of God. We are drowned in sense and the love of earthly things; and in spiritual things, our hearts are sensual and earthly. Now you perceive the doctrine of this chapter, clearly aiming at the raising of men's hearts to heaven. That is the end of the gospel and all preaching, that men may learn, in all their actions, to eye God more and man less; to be less earnest and careful for earth, and more for heaven. This is the scope of the chapter.

These two main evils in the heart of man, hypocrisy and earthliness, spring from ignorance and forgetfulness of God. Deep persuasions of God and heavenly things, would set men and earthly things very low in our hearts. Would it be possible for men to love the praise of men more than the praise of God, if they considered what he is, and what man is; how high and how lasting a good is his liking and approbation, how poor and vanishing a thing is man's good opinion? Oh, atheism, atheism! hence springs the love of present things. Both these go under that name, present esteem, and present possessions. The one, the love of air (as I may say), the other, the love of earth; and both spring from want of belief and love of heaven, so high above both. This is the great work, to call off the eye from this low prospect, to raise it up higher, to look *not on things seen, but on things not seen.* And oh, the odds! *Things that are seen, are temporal: things that are not seen, are eternal.* 2 Cor. iv. 18. At this our Savior aims his discourse, to persuade men to singleness of heart in their performance of religious duties, and moderation of mind in their provision for earthly necessities.

Having spoken of doing good in the former chapter, he speaks now of the manner and intention which is chiefly to be heeded, to exceed the Pharisees, who did many outward actions, particularly of these here specified, but spoiled all by the wretched desire of vain glory; a subtle ev', preying most on best things, alms, prayer, &c.—a moth that breeds in and corrupts the finest garments.

The duties he particularly names, as these three, *alms, prayer, fasting.* Alms I scruple not to call a religious duty, though of the Second Table, upon the apostle St. James's warrant, Jam. i. 27. And the way of it which our Savior here teaches, will make it religious indeed: to regard God in it, not to seek to appear to man, yea, to seek not to appear to man; to hide and cover it all that thou canst from men. We are commanded, indeed, in the former chapter, to *let our light shine before men:* this here is not contrary, yea, *that* is the same with this: *this* barring vain self-glory, *that* directing to God's glory. *Let your light shine,* but *so* shine (like the sun that gives light and scarcely suffers you to look upon itself) *that they may see your works,* yourselves, as little as may be, and *may glorify,* not you, but *your heavenly father.* Good actions can not well be hid, and possibly, some even of this sort, giving of alms. Yea, sometimes it may be necessary for example and exciting others, that they should know of it. But take heed that vanity creep not in under this. And further than either unavoidable necessity, or some evident further good of thy neighbor carries it, desire to be unknown and unseen in this. When it must be public, let thy intention be secret. Take no delight in having the eyes of men on thee: yea, rather count it a pain, and still eye God alone, for he eyes thee. And remember it, even in public acts of charity, and other such like, *He sees in secret.* Though the action be no secret, the spring, the source of it is, and he sees by what weights the wheels go, and he still looks upon that; views thy heart, the hidden bent and intention of it, which man can not see. So then, though in some cases thou must be seen to do, yet in no case do to be seen: that differs much, and where that is, even the other will be as little as may be. Thou wilt desire rather, and, where it can be, still choose to do unseen, that others should know as little of thy charity as may be, besides the party that receives it; yea, if it might be, that even the party might not know,—as he that stole in money under his sick friend's pillow; yea, to let thy very self know as little as possible, as our Savior here expresses it, *Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.* An excellent word! Reflect not on it as thy action, with self-pleasing; that is the left hand in view; but look on God's goodness to thee, that thou art not in the receiver's room, and he in thine; that he makes thee able to relieve another, which many are not, and being able, makes thee willing, which far fewer are. For both, thou art to bless him, and be the humbler, the more thou dost. Take thy very giving to thy distressed brother, as a gift from God, a further obligation on thee. Though he is pleased to become thy debtor for a further reward, yet, truly, the thing itself is his gift, and a great one, as David acknowledges excellently in their offering to the Temple. 1 Chron. xxix. 14: *But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly, after this sort? For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.* Not only the power, but the will is from God, both *of thine own which we give thee.*

Oh, how far are the most from this direct looking to God, this heart-enlarging love of God! And therefore are they so close-handed to the necessities of the poor, even of the saints, where some enforcing occasion, some eye of men, some wretched side respect or other draws it not forth. A thousand objections are raised: either they need it not, or will not accept of it, or have this fault or that,

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are proud or idle, &c. But does not thy God see what is at the bottom of all this logic, these disputes before they come off with anything? And when thou dost give, how much of self, and how little of God is there in it! The left hand knows, yea, it is done with the left hand, though the bodily right hand do it. Most men's charity is altogether left-handed: sinister respects and intentions are the main movers in it.

But how noble and happy a thing is a truly liberal heart! Even natural liberty hath much beauty in it, but much more that which is spiritual and Christian. According to thy power, abounding in good works, that is riches,—*rich in good works*; and *he that soweth plentifully, shall reap plentifully*. And be cheerful in it, and do this for God, out of love to him. And for the fruit, how rich is that! So much as it is fit to look to reward, look to God's only. Take him as thy debtor upon his word, rather than present payment from men. Theirs is present indeed, and our carnal hearts are all for the present, but consider, as it is present, so it passes presently, and is straightway spent. God's reward, though to come, is yet certain, and when come, is abiding, everlasting. Thus, in respect of all good actions, and a holy, self-denying course of life, in nothing take pay of men. How vain, what smoke is it, their breath, and how soon will it be spent! And then, when thou shouldst come to look for a reward from God, to know it is done, that you are paid already! That well judged, is one of the saddest words in all the scripture, the hypocrite's doom. He hath no more to look for; he would be seen, and was seen; he would be praised of men, and praised he was; he is paid, and can expect no further, but that reward which he would gladly miss, the hypocrite's portion, *eternal fire*.

As to *prayer*, how foolish and how wretched a thing is it, to speak to God, and look to men! What is there wherein the heart will be single and abstracted from men, and commune with God alone, if not in prayer?

Another evil, much like to that of show, is here corrected, an affected, empty, babbling length in prayer, without affection. The want of that makes a short prayer long and babbling: while much of that, makes a long prayer short: as in a speech, the quality is the measure of the quantity, a long speech may be very short. This affected length we incline to very much in holy exercises; many beads are dropped, and *paternosters* said, &c. We lay too much stress on the continuance and length; think all's well, if enough be done; whereas God's thoughts are far other, and ours should conform to his. It is enough if well done. If the heart is close to him in ever so short a prayer, there is much said in a little. We usually speak many words, and say little. For help in this, the most excellent model given by our Savior, is here inserted; the beautiful order and full comprehensive matter of which, can never be enough admired.

Then as to *fasting*, which is a necessary help of prayer: it does unclog and free the wings of the soul to mount to heaven; and in some respects, it is a help to alms too. The same rule must here be observed, to appear as little as may be; for the affected discovery spoils and loses all, yea, the needless discovery runs too much hazard, therefore it is by all means to be avoided. Personal fasting should be conducted secretly. Practise constant temperance. Better to let the bridle be always short held on thy appetite, than sometimes to pull it in extremely, and then lay the reins loose again; that is the way to stumble and fall in both.

Ver 19. *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.*] In these words our Savior enforces the other point of *moderation*. The heart in heaven, and fixed on the true treasure there, is the only way to regulate and moderate the desires in all things on earth. For it is the distempered love of earthly things that causes all the distracting care about them; and the cause of that distempered love to earth, is ignorance of heaven, and disaffection to it. Men may discourse of many considerations, and sometimes think soberly, how foolishly man turmoils, and *is disquieted in vain*, heaping up, and not knowing who shall possess, and knowing certainly that not he very long, that he is shortly to leave all. But these things will not prevail: men keep their hold. Not only their hands, but their hearts, are still fastened to what they have, and what they would have still more of, rather than of those excellent things which would call them off from earthly enjoyments, to fix them on heaven and immortality, if these were really believed.

*Where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.*] Inward decay, and outward hazards! The treasure *above* is free from both. Oh, that ours were there! But hearts that are so little there, make it very questionable. Oh, for an eye single and pure, enlightened to behold that blessed hope, and to fix upon it! Can an heir of heaven be much troubled upon earth? Impossible. If at any time his heart bends that way, will he not straightly check himself, and think, What am I doing? Is this my business? The Gentiles seek for them, and look for no more: they must make the best of them; but would I be content with this for my portion? Where lies my treasure? Who is my master?

Ver. 24–34. *No man can serve two masters. Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life.*] Our Savior here argues against the service of the world; first, as unworthy a servant of Christ; secondly, as impossible for him; thirdly, as needless, and that at large. *Your heavenly Father know your need*, and cares for you. Ye need not

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both care, his care is sufficient. Further, it is fruitless; such your perplexing care is, for due diligence in one's calling is not barred; yea, that is to be used, that we may care the less. Then it avails nothing. Ver. 27. *Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?* Lay these things together. Your Father will care and provide. He that clothes the lilies, and feeds the birds, will he allow his children to starve and go naked? Then think how preposterous and absurd to distrust him in these petty things, when you trust him in so much greater.

Ver. 33. *But seek ye first the kingdom of God.* A kingdom! Oh, seek that, and account, as he does, all things else but accessaries, a parcel by-the-by, to be cast in. But alas! little see we of that great inheritance, that kingdom, and therefore these little poor things seem so great with us.

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## CHAPTER VII.

WE have here continued the dropping of the divine doctrine of Christ, distilling as the dew in several brief rules, as pure pearly drops of heavenly wisdom, in divers particulars of main use and concernment.

First, there is a direction concerning the judging of men, ver. 1-6. Then, another, regarding the supplicating of God, ver. 7–11. After that, the straight rule of equity given us, ver. 12. And then, the straight way of happiness recommended, ver. 13, 14. Lastly, a double word of caution to undeceive us, both in the discerning of others' teaching, and our own learning, ver. 15–27: we are to beware that we be not deluded by false teachers, and that we delude not ourselves, being false learners under the teaching of truth. These are most weighty points; but light vain hearts are little taken with them.

Ver. 1–5. *Judge not, that ye be not judged.*] This is a most common evil in man's perverse nature. Even moral men have taken notice of it; yea, almost every man perceives and hates it in another, and yet hugs it in himself. This is the evil—unequal judging; sharpsightedness in the evils of others, and blindness in our own. And this very evil itself, of unequal judging, we can perceive in another, and overlook in our own bosom. What discourse fills most societies, and consumes their time, but descant on the conditions and actions of others!

Lawful judgments in states, for the censuring and punishment of crimes, are not barred; nor, in private persons, a prudent discerning of what is evil and sinful in others, and judging accordingly of it. But this *judging* is, the usually taking the chair to censure all persons and affairs about us; the prying into the actions, yea, even the intentions of men, either through a false glass, seeing faults where there are none, or through a magnifying and multiplying glass, making them appear many more than indeed they are. This is done, first, by a curious searching into the actions of others; secondly, by the censuring of good and indifferent actions as evil; thirdly, by hasty, rash censuring of doubtful actions, though a little suspicious; fourthly, by a true censuring of evil actions, yet not with a good intention—not to amend but to defame thy brother; and, fifthly, by a desperate sentencing of the final estate even of the worst.

This is here declared to be dangerous and preposterous. 1st. *Dangerous*, by drawing an answerably severe censure and judgment upon ourselves, usually even from men, but, however, certainly from God. Thou that playest the arch critic on all around thee, art thou without fault? Hast thou flattered thyself into such a fancy, as to think that thou art above all exception? Is there nothing, either a true or a seeming blemish, for any to point at in thee? Surely there is something, some part lying open, that men may hit at thee; and they will surely not miss to do it, if thou provokest them. However, remember, if thou shouldest escape all tongues, and pass free this way, yet, *One* unavoidable searching hand thou must come under; *His* judgment who sees thee to the bottom, and can charge thee with the secret sins of thy bosom. He can and will so pay thee home, all thy unjust judgments of thy brethren, with just judging of thy ways and thoughts, that thou thyself shalt confess no wrong is done to thee. *For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.*

Then, 2dly. It is *absurd* and *preposterous. First cast the beam out of thine own eye.* If thou wouldst, to any good purpose, take knowledge of thy brother's failings, begin at home; so clear thine eye as to discern aright. A heart well purified speaks the most suitable and pertinent reproofs, and they prove the most piercing and powerful.

Shall these things prevail, my brethren? Were it love to God, a fire of holy zeal, it would seize first on things nearest it; but it is a flying, infernal wildfire, running abroad and scattering itself. Is not this the grand entertainment? Such-a-one is a foolish person; another, proud; a third, covetous. And of persons professing religion, yet will ye say, They are as contentious, and bitter, and avaricious as others: or, at best, if you have nothing to say against them particularly, yet, All is dissimulation; they are but hypocrites. And while a mind is of this vein, believe me, the most blameless track of life, and in it the the very best action, how easy is it to invent a sinister sense of it, and blur it!

But oh! my brethren, be not so foolish. Blunt the fiery edge off your censures on yourselves, where it is so safe and advantageous to be thorough and home. Just the opposite to this, judging others incurs sharp judgment; but judging thyself is the way not to be judged. 1 Cor. xi. 31. *For if we*

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*would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.* This is the happy and gainful severity. Learn, then, to look upon others, and all their ways, with the highest charity, which *thinketh no evil*, is witty and inventive of good constructions upon anything that may clear them, as malice is of miscensures of the best things. Take all candidly and mildly by the easiest side, the right handle. And for thyself, search thy heart; sift, try thy best actions, find out thy own earthliness, thy pride and vanity, thy selfishness and hypocrisy, even in good. A self-searching Christian is made up of humility and meekness. If thou wouldst find much peace and favor with God and man, be very low in thine own eyes. Forgive thyself little, and others much.

Ver. 6. *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs.*] The former rule abates the sharp eye of rash judging; this quickens and clears the eye of right discerning: that was for the moderate censuring of evil; this is for the prudent imparting of good. Be ready to communicate spiritual good to all, yet so as, if men do evidence themselves to be as dogs and swine, to have that high esteem of holy things, as not to prostitute them to their contempt and rage, and wrong both those excellent things and yourselves: *lest they trample them*, as puddled swine, not knowing their worth, *and turn again and rend you, as* enraged dogs.

*Holy things—pearls.* So are they esteemed by all that know them; the sweet and precious promises of the word, the excellent high calling of a Christian; and their price is inestimable. *The pearl of great price is*, Jesus Christ, revealed in the gospel. Oh, learn and seek after high esteeming thoughts of him and of Divine things. Learn to be rich in those, and to covet them indeed. And though imparting them to others, it impairs them not to yourselves, and therefore you are to be ready and free that way; yet, because of some manifest despisers of them, learn this wisdom in that matter, *Give not holy things to dogs.*

There is an imprudent zeal, and sometimes a mixture of an irreverent commonness, in speaking of holy things indifferently in all companies. Certainly, such company willingly ought to be chosen, as give most liberal and kind entertainment to such discourse. But when not of choice, but by some unavoidable engagement, we fall among others, then our rule ought to be, not to partake of their ungodly ways and communication; but for the communicating, in another way, holy things to them, this must be well advised on, whether it be suitable to this rule. We are not, indeed, to give persons easily up for desperate, as dogs or swine; this were to fall into the former fault of rash judging; but where they are evidently such, the respect for holy things is to be preserved, and not unwisely to be exposed to their derision.

Much need is there of a spirit of wisdom in this, without which there is no instructing by rules, so as to guide us aright in all particular occurrences and societies; therefore we are to beg that *anointing* that *teaches us all things.* 1 John ii. 27. Speak willingly to God, but still with holy fear in thyself, and it may be entertained with holy fear to others.

Ver. 7. *Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*] This is for advantage to all. For wisdom to follow the foregoing and following rules, the great purveyor of a Christian, is prayer, and the great qualifications of prayer, are *perseverance* and *fervency. Ask—seek—knock;* be earnest and importunate; give not over. And the great support, the very life of prayer, that which quickens and continues it, and keeps it from giving over, is *faith*, a firm persuasion of audience and attainment. This is here ascertained by our Savior; proved by irrefragable argument. All good is promised to be given, and that which is the top of all, the chief to be sought, *the Holy Spirit*, is promised *to them that ask it*, as St. Luke hath it. We say our prayers, and there is an end. And this perfunctorious formality creeps even upon Christians who are unwary and slothful, and hence so little is obtained. Many that pray, know little of this Divine art of prayer, this wrestling with God, this resolving not to let him go until he bless them, as Jacob did.

Ver. 12. *Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.*] This is added, and seems connected, but it is another rule apart, and this great rule which all know and few observe—in equity, in charity, meekness, and all due respect. Self, self undoes all, and sets the world on fire. Though it be a separate precept, yet it may have some aspect to the former respecting prayer, as, if you would have God condescending, and favorable, and bountiful to you, be so to men; and so you shall be, if you change places and suppose yourself in their room, and they in yours. *This is the law and the prophets:* that is, all is of this nature. Duty to others, as pressed in the law and the prophets, is reducible to this.

Ver. 13. *Enter ye in at the strait gate.*] This is undeniably a main point; yet, alas! we seem not to think so. How disinclined are we to the way of eternal happiness! The difficulty is so represented as to add an edge to our earnestness, not to abate and weaken our endeavors. This way is strait indeed, but there is still room enough within. John xiv. 2. *In my Father's house are many mansions.* The ease and delight there, shall abundantly compensate all the trouble in the way. We must resolve then, if we would not perish, that we must take this way, how strait and rugged soever, and strip and put off all that entangles and encumbers—that swelling pride, those superfluous desires and lusts; yea, to put off and leave behind even self itself. Once

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in at that gate, we shall find all perfectly compensated. And remember, they are few that enter; few there are that so much as seek it, but far fewer that find it, even of those that make some kind of seeking after it. *Many shall seek to enter* (so it is in the other evangelist), *and shall not be able;* therefore, *strive ye.* What bustle is there made by sea and land for scraps of this earth, and heaven alone is so cheap in our eyes, as if it were worth no diligence, scarce even a serious thought! Surely, either heaven is but a fancy, or the world is mad?

Ver. 15. *Beware of false prophets.*] Not to go wrong in our way, we must take heed not to mistake our guides (especially as so many in all ages give themselves out for such), that they mislead us not, wrapping error in truth's mantle: yet, there is ever something to a discerning eye, that will readily discover them. As for the grand deceiver, the Devil, the vulgar fable, that in all apparitions whatsoever there is still the shape of a cloven foot, holds true, for there is something in their carriage that, narrowly eyed, will tell what they are. *Ye shall know them by their fruits.*

Ver. 21. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.*] But every man is his own worst deceiver; therefore he ought most to beware of himself. Whether teacher or learner, he is his own false prophet, *speaking peace where there is no peace.* Therefore, beware of yourselves. Delude not yourselves with a vain trust in an empty profession. *Not every one that says, Lord, Lord*—that makes much noise and sound of the name of Christ, yea, that bears his name to others, that preaches him. Oh! how many shall find themselves to have misreckoned in that day, when they are not owned by him, but commanded away by that sad word *depart!* Look to it, therefore, to the truth of denying yourselves, and your own will, and yielding yourselves up to God: *but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven,* says our Savior. Oh! take heed of founding your house *in the sand.* Though ever so stately and fair built, and showing fine, yet that foundation will be its ruin. There is no safe building but on the rock, *that rock of salvation* who here taught this doctrine. Then come storms as they will, there can be no fear. *He that buildeth on him shall not be ashamed.* 1 Peter ii. 6. No matter what houses or lands ye have here, whether any or none—he himself had none here—provided you build on him as the foundation of eternal blessedness. Oh, that men would think of this, and amidst all their ensuring of things still unsure, would mind the making of this sure, which may be made so sure for ever, as not to be moved!

Ver. 28. *And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine.*] A divine way of teaching! Even some not converted, are yet struck and astonished with it, but by this eminently, *He taught them as one having authority.* This not only by a powerful secret influence, on hearts which he touched by his Divine power, but even in the way of his own teaching. And for some measure of this his ministers ought to seek, and to seek it from him, if they would find it. There is a force in things spoken from the heart with holy and spiritual affection: even common things thus spoken, are far above the greatest strains and notions, that are only an harangue or speech framed by strength of gifts and study. Oh! much prayer would put life and authority into what we speak. To be much on the mount with God, would *make our faces shine* when coming with his message to men.

## CHAPTER VIII.

HE *dwelt among us,* says St. John, *and we saw his glory, as the glory of the only-begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth.* This all his history testifies of him, both his marvellous doctrine foregoing, and his miraculous works that here follow.

Ver. 1. *When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.*] A thing he nowise regarded, yet would not hinder; yea, he continued teaching and working those things that drew them. His delight was not in their flocking after him, but in instructing and doing them good.

Ver. 2. *And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him.*] Whether this was intended as the highest kind of civil reverence, as to a prophet, or Divine worship, as to God, it is not easy to aver, because it is hard to determine what kind of persuasion he, and the centurion, and others now coming to him, had; how little, or how much, or if any apprehension of him as the Messiah and Son of God. This being as yet not much noised abroad, yet they might have it by special revelation from God. A high confidence, however, there was of a Divine power being with him for the greatest works. This is clearly expressed; and in whatsoever notion it was, our Savior takes it very graciously, and grants their suits. We are commonly unsatisfied with all that comes not up to our own height; but our meek Redeemer cherisheth sincerity, and accepts of what he finds, even the very least, and extols it to the highest pitch it was capable of.

*Lord, if thou will, thou canst make me clean.*] Strong confidence and humility are contempered in this word: confidence in asserting full power in Christ for the work (the doubt of his will can not be challenged as injurious or unbelieving, for he had as yet no warrant absolutely to believe that he would); the humility in the way of propounding it, not daring peremptorily to sue for it, but moving it thus, as a thing in his hand to do; the sense of his vile disease and other unworthiness, it

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is likely, depressing him, and forming his desire in this style only, as representing and reserving the matter with humble submission, as resolved not to quarrel nor complain if he should refuse, but to acknowledge pure compassion and goodness, if obtained: *q. d.* Lord, it becomes not such a horrid, polluted wretch to say any further than this, I believe, and crave leave to say it out, *if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*

Ver. 3. *And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him.*] And this humble motion is as graciously taken: he hath straightway real experience both of the power that he believed in, and of the good-will that he durst not think himself so sure of, yet had (no doubt) some good hope of. Thou sayest, I can? I say, *I will: be thou clean.* And the touch of his hand is a concurrent sign of his goodness and condescension. That word had power enough alone, without the touch; yet it goes not alone, lest it should look like a disdain of touching. He is pleased, therefore, to put his pure hand to the defiled skin of this leper, being in no hazard to receive pollution by that touch by which the leper received a cleansing. And thus in his word he speaks to sinners, where he hath revealed his will together with his power; and that we may doubt it not, we may read it in his blood streaming forth for our cleansing. Yet, if any one, out of a deep sense of his vileness, think, "I know that he can cleanse me, but will he look upon such a one? Or, if he look, will he not straight turn away? Will he vouchsafe to touch my filthy sores, and apply his own precious blood for my cleansing and healing? Yes, *he will.*" Speak it not as doubting, but as humbly referring the matter, thou mayest even in the same style, say, Lord, "I am filthy as ever any that came to thee, yet, *if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*" And thou shalt find that powerful cure from a word of his mouth, and a touch of his hand, that all thy scrubbing, and washing, and bathing in legal self-cleansings, could never have attained; and that not only as to the guiltiness, but likewise as to the power and polluting filthiness of thy sin. And this is to be laid before him in the prevailings of lusts and sinful impurities: "Lord, thou knowest how impossible it is for me, and I know how possible, how easy it is for thee, to cleanse me." And if thou shouldst say no more, lie before him, and look upward till he pity thee. If he be not changed from what he was, he *will* pity thee, and thou shalt find it.

Ver. 4. *And Jesus saith unto him, See that thou tell no man.*] This charge not to divulge the cure, besides our Lord's exemplary humility in avoiding noise, was that he might wait the fitter time of discovering himself, and because as yet, it might rather hinder him: as Mark i. 45. The other evangelists tell us that the man kept not this injunction, wherein, though he was to be blamed, yet there is some excuse in part, from the ardent affection and overcoming joy that he could not well conceal. Nor are we sharply to inveigh against all the impertinences and imprudences of new converts, in their speeches and carriage in religious things, though they are to be admonished to study prudence. It is no wonder that so high a change does a little transport them beyond their bounds. The *showing to the priest,* and *offering of the gift,* was both a respect to the law, not as yet out of date, and a provision for a testimony for Christ, when it should be afterward known that he had done it. This may be the meaning of that word, *for a testimony to them.* And it is not at all unlikely that the restraint from publishing it to others, was only till it should be first shown to the priest, and approved by him as full cleanness, which, possibly, otherwise, out of envy to Jesus Christ, they might have denied, if it had been known and famed abroad as his work.

Ver. 5–9. *And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him.*] The history of the centurion hath much of the like confidence and lowliness. He desired him but to say the word, no more being needful for the thing to be done, and no more fit to be desired of him who is addressed. *I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof.* They that spake for him, as St. Luke hath it, said, *He was worthy for whom Jesus should do this.* He, of a far different mind, sends by others what is here related as his own speech; they speaking what he put in their mouths, that he was not unworthy of Christ's presence. His confidence of power in Christ's word to do the deed, he expresses by the resemblance of his own command over his soldiers. He himself being but one under others, was yet so readily obeyed by those under him; and he believed all diseases to be much more under the word of Jesus's command. So, indeed, they know his word, and so, also, he rebukes soul-diseases and they are gone, as the fever in the next history. Oh! if we did but believe this and put him to it! For faith doth so, and in a manner commands him, as he doth all other things.

Ver. 10. *When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said unto them that followed, Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.*] This man was a stranger, and a soldier, yet, it seems, a proselyte; and our Lord, receiving this as a kind of first fruits of the Gentiles, foretells upon it a plentiful harvest of them: *Many shall come, and the children of the kingdom be cast out,* Ver. 11. This is a harsh word to the Jews; and yet, thus often, the most remote and unlikely, who have long lived strangers to religion, have proved notable converts: and they that have lived from their childhood under a powerful ministry, and with persons professing religion, and have themselves been moulded into a form of it, yet die in their sins, and never lay hold of that salvation un-

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to which they always seem to be so near. And this near miss of happiness is the greatest misery. *Children of the kingdom* in outward appearance and church privileges, yet, prove children of wrath, not only not entering into the kingdom they had a seeming title to, but *cast out* into the dungeon *of utter darkness!*

Observe the misery of the damned, resembled by *utter darkness*, void of light, and full of hideous noises and cries; *weeping and gnashing of teeth.* And the happiness of glory is resembled to a banquet, where there is full light and joy; a coronation banquet, where all the company of kings *sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.* And this and all other resemblances in Scripture are but a dark shadow of that bright glory. Oh! were the things of eternity, the misery and the blessedness to come, indeed believed, how much would our thoughts be in them, and how little room would they leave for the trifles and vanities that our hearts are taken up with!

Ver. 14. *When Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever.*] He takes humble, compassionate notice of all maladies where he comes, and is touched with the griefs of his own, and so moved as to touch and heal them. This King's *touch* cures all sorts of diseases: it did so while he walked in a low despised condition on earth, and it does so still by that virtual Divine power, now that he is in heaven; and although his glory there is greater, his compassion is not less than when he was here; and his compassion always was, and is, directed much more to souls diseased, than to bodies, as they are better and more valuable.

Ver. 15. *And she arose, and ministered unto them.*] Oh! thus it should still be; yea, thus it will be. They whom he cures, will bestow upon him the health aud strength they have received by him, and shall be serviceable to him. How can it be so fitly and duly employed? Then are all deliverances and favors, outward and inward work, most kindly and sweetly enjoyed, when they are most quickly and entirely returned to their spring, all improved and offered up to him from whom they come.

Ver. 16. *When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed.*] Upon the report of these works, they run to him in great numbers. Oh, that upon the report of his all-healing virtue published in the gospel, sick souls were thronging about him! The others were welcome, but these would be much more so. Many came to him, and we hear of none who were turned away without help. *He cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick,* Oh, come hither, all ye that have anything that troubles you. Is it a lethargic, a dead benumbness of spirit, or is it a fever, a boiling of passions or lusts, yea, is it, as it were, a kind of possession of an unclean or an unquiet spirit? Come forward: here is help for thee. He cured those here, *with his word.* Now that word of the prophet, here applied (ver. 17), had its accomplishment in part, even in these works; in his suffering the importunity of the multitudes coming early and late, and suffering likewise the maladies he cured, by the tender compassion he felt in doing it. He is not a hard-hearted, insensible physician; no, he is matchless in love and tenderness, feeling as it were *their* pains who came to him, till they were cured; and he still does feel the pains and groans of his own, on their sick beds. And yet, all this, his curing all these bodily evils, was but a pledge of the higher averring and fulfilling of the prophetical word. Our first disease struck nearer to him by far, than those that he cured: he put on the pain of all our transgressions, the whole weight falling at once upon his back, as the apostle renders it—*bare our sins in his own body on the tree.* Now, of that wonderful way of curing, by bearing and transferring over upon himself our spiritual maladies and miseries, there could not be a fitter prelude and foresign, than this of healing diseased bodies. Sickness is one of the bitter and chief fruits of sin. Next to proper spiritual evils, none are more grievous, yea, none so much. It sits the closest, and the sense of it can least be shifted. Other things that are without a man, are capable of more easy diversion; fancy, or reason, may bear off much; but paining sickness will not be so lightly argued out: the demonstrations are very sensible and conclusive.

As in other things, so it is here; health, the chief of temporal blessings, as much as anything, passes unesteemed and unconsidered while we enjoy it. But oh, a fit of sickness makes it sweet, gives it the highest recommendation: the groans and plaints of a sick bed are the most powerful rhetoric to commend health. What can a man enjoy of all the pleasures and pomp about him, when blasted by one sharp pain seizing upon any part of him? Amidst all attendance and furniture, he thinks the poorest scullion in his house, that is in health, much happier than he for the time. Yet this we think not of, while we eat and sleep, and have tolerable health; consider not that continued mercy, how great it is; think not on the difference between that, and loathing of all food, weary, restless nights, and tossings to and fro until the morning.

Now I say, this considered, the goodness and power of Jesus Christ were most fitly manifested in this way, as introductive to the great deliverance from sin and death, he came to effect for us, by bearing them himself, in our stead, and so taking them away. And so, in cures afterward, as you find in the next chapter, he began to let out somewhat of that, as the main: *Thy sins are forgiven thee.* And without this, what is health it-



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self. though in its kind very precious, especially when so speedily and easily restored after sickness by a word or a touch? Yet, what had this been but a little reprieval, while the sentence of death, yea, eternal death, was still standing, and shortly to fall on? Oh, the lifting of that desperate sinking burthen, our sins, and taking them upon himself for us! How far do all words, and what is larger, all thoughts, fall short of the height of that love! Oh, boundless, immense love! It will take up eternity to consider it.

Ver. 18. *Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.*] Other reasons may be imagined for his withdrawing from these, but it appears that his work now lay elsewhere, and he was to go through it. And the other evangelists are express in this: *I must preach also to other cities, for for this came I forth.* He had much work, and a short time to perform it in; so he follows it diligently. Thus his servants ought to go or stay, indifferently, for all places and services, as they are called, and not to please others and themselves, but him who sends them.

Ver. 19, 20. *And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, Foxes have holes,* &c.] Strange! Our Savior seems to turn off the very ready and full offer of one, and to put forward another who drew back. He is, indeed, absolutely free in his choice, and may without control do this, let pass high temporary fits and offers, and lay hold on what hath far less appearance. And the truth is, he is privy to the secret actions of men's hearts, and can discern in some of a very plausible zeal and forwardness, some false principles within, whence it is kindled; and in others more slow and inactive, sees under that more sincerity at the bottom. This scribe, possibly, taken with the splendor of Christ's miracles, and the flocking of multitudes unto him, perceived not his present poverty and meanness, and after disgraces and sufferings. Many make lavish offers to religion at a time when it is in request, or possibly upon some discernment of its own worth and beauty, but do not count the cost; consider not the enmity of the world, the outward meanness, the reproaching and despisings that usually attend it. It is indeed by far the best bargain with all those who count the cost, if men would understand it right, and think it so ere they engage in it.

Now we see what condition Christ, who was Lord of all, chose for our sakes, amid his own to live as a stranger, having no property, not so much as the beasts and the birds. *He became poor to make us rich,* 2 Cor. viii. 9; not rich in those things he was poor in, but in things infinitely better. In that he calls his followers, most commonly, to a conformity with himself: he forbids not, indeed, property and possessions, but surely we should learn amid all to walk, in affection at least, like him, as strangers here, not glued to anything, *using the world as though we used it not.* And they who are really thus as he was, oh, what comfort have they in this! How is it sweetened to them, if in that condition they indeed follow him! Hast thou no dwelling of thy own, no possession, and little for present supply? Look up to him who passed through here in that very same way, and cleave the closer to him; so much the more eye him as thy riches and portion, and thou needst not envy kings in their best days. And whatsoever be thy estate, how soon shall it be past! And all that live, have much a like space of earth to lie down in at last. But oh, the rich inheritance above, for all that lay hold on it, and follow our Lord Jesus Christ by the way!

Ver. 21. *Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.*] Now the other craves a delay. And a world of such excuses there are. They that will not give Christ an absolute refusal, yet have somewhat first to be done. This match, or bargain, or purchase, or at least a time civilly to take farewell of friends; and thus the most shift it off. But as to those whom he resolves to have, he will not take their refusal. *Let the dead,* says he, *bury their dead.* There are enough of common persons, who have no share of life in me, they may do that; *Follow thou me.* Oh! happy they whom he will not loose; whom he powerfully, yet sweetly constrains to break from all and follow him! Sure I am, it shall never repent them.

Ver. 23–27. *And being entered into a ship, there arose a great tempest.*] Still new occasions, and accordingly new evidence of the Divine power of Jesus Christ. Upon the ship wherein he is, there may, and usually does arise a storm; yet, happy is it to be embarked with him upon all hazards! His ship may be tost, but perish it can not. His counsels are deep and wise, and we can not find them out. He knows what he is about to do, when we can least understand him. When we think that he leads out his people to be swallowed up in the sea, or destroyed in the wilderness, he is only raising a mount for himself to be seen on, and bringing them into the view of dangers, yea, of apparent ruin, to be more glorious in their deliverance. *His way is in the deep, and his footsteps are not known. Canst thou by searching find out God?* says he in Job. Which is not, I conceive, so much meant of his essence, as of his operations and ways, which are so profound and untraceable. We are at a stand often to think what he means to do; whether he has given up his church and cause to the winds and waves, when his enemies rage and roar, and he is silent, as if he cared not what became of all. The seas swell, the ship is tost, and he sleeps.

Not to speak here of Christ putting on our natural frailties, or of this sleep, whether it

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was natural or voluntary; it might be and likely was both: wearied with the concourse of the multitude on the land, he falls asleep in the ship; yet, doubtless, he had the command of those natural inclinations in himself, and chooses now to sleep, to increase the appearance of the danger, and add horror to the visage of it. So no doubt it did; not all the blustering of the winds, nor the rising of the waves, was so frightful and sad to the disciples, as that their Master slept so sound in the midst of them; so sound as if rocked asleep by them, and either wholly insensible, or very regardless of their danger: as St. Luke expresses their feelings, *Carest thou not that we perish?* Now, in this man who slept, dwelt God who sleeps not, *the Watchman of Israel*, who does not so much as *slumber*. But they, either not so clearly understanding, or, in the fright, not so duly remembering and considering this, were eying only the posture wherein he was visible to them; therefore, the sounder he slept, it awaked and increased their fear the more. And as Jesus Christ here really did, even so God seems sometimes to his own to do; and they express it so. Thus the Psalmist: *Awake, arise, why sleepest thou, O Lord?* This he seems to do, when the ungodly prosper, and when his people lie trodden under foot, and he seems to take no notice of their pressure, nor stirs for their deliverance. And this is the saddest part of their affliction; they have no hope nor stay, but in the favor and protection of their God: now when that is retired, and the curtain drawn, and he asleep, their prayers not heard, and no appearance of his help, I say it is a grand trial of faith, which shakes and disquiets more than all other things, how terrible soever. No rage or noise of the enemy is so grievous as the silence and sleeping of God. Thus, in a soul, when lusts and temptations are swelling and raging, and God is retired, and as asleep to it, says nothing, controls them not, but suffers them to take their course; this is that which breeds the highest anguish, and brings a soul to the mouth of the pit, to the brink of desperation. Then it is forced to cry for a word from his mouth: Lord Jesus, speak but a word; keep not silence to me, or I am undone: there is no recovery for me; if thou keep silence, I am dead: *I shall be like them that go down to the pit;* or, as it is here, *Save, Master, or we perish.*

And this is one main end for which he does sleep, to awake us, to rouse and stir our prayers, which commonly are, in times of ease, vy, drowsy, lifeless things, as a man's ech in sleep, dreaming, incoherent, sense-stuff. This they may be to God, who kens to what the heart says in them, gh, to man's ears, the words may be fit good sense. But by the straining of a p affliction, or near pressing danger, the is awaked and speaks itself. Such a .d seems to sound in its ears, as that of e mariners to Jonah, *Arise, thou sluggard, and call upon thy God.* Men lo but trifle in fair weather, but in the storm they are more in earnest. Especially, a soul acquainted with God, that follows and relies upon him, will take this course, and no other: it runs straight to him, and if he be asleep, awakes him. And in this they are to be approved and commended, that, as here, their course is to Jesus Christ, as confident of his power and willingness to deliver them. This the disciples did believe; otherwise they had not left working for themselves, to go to awake him.

Yet was there, with their faith, a mixture of distempered, distrustful fear, which Jesus well knew, and which he would not otherwise have charged them with. He doth not altogether deny that there was faith in them, but checks the deficiency of it: *O ye of little faith, why did ye doubt?* Apprehend danger and fear they might; yea, if they had not, they would not have come to Christ in that manner. Without a living sense of distress or danger, there can be neither faith nor prayer. These are stirred up and raised to act, by the knowledge and feeling of our need of help. But the misery is, we scarcely in anything know our bounds: our passions raised, do usually overflow and pass the banks. A little fear does but awake faith, but much fear weakens it, and in the awakening gives it too great a blow, such a one as astonishes it, and makes it stagger. That they were afraid, was tolerable; but their hearts, it seems, were not so established in the persuasion of Christ's Divine power and care of them, as became them: and this he plainly, yet gently, checks. And there is this alloy of distrust in believing, not only in the weaker, but even in the strongest Christian; and there is a continual wrestling between them; sometimes the one is uppermost, and sometimes the other: but faith, in the end, shall have the victory. See what strange difference there was between Job and Job: would one think it were the same person?—one while cursing his birth, and wishing for death, and yet, afterward declaring, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* And again, afterward, complaining, *Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thy enemy?* And yet anon, again, *I know that my Redeemer liveth.* This they should think of, who doubt because they doubt, and multiply distrust upon itself, concluding that they have no faith, because they find so much and so frequent doubting within them. But this is a great mistake. Some doubtings there may be, where there is even much faith: and a little faith there may be, where there is much doubting. But, upon this account, is doubting by any means to be entertained or favored? Yea, it is to be hated and opposed with all our strength, and the strength of God must be implored to overcome it, as the grand enemy of our peace, and his glory. By all means is faith to be cherished, and distrust to be checked. Our Savior pardons it in his disciples, yet he

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blames it. He refuses not his help, yet he blames their unbelief. *O ye of little faith!* He requires, and delights in a strong, firm believing on him, though the least and weakest he rejects not.

Having first rebuked their fear, he rebukes the storm that caused it, and makes a calm, *a great calm.* No wonder that they wondered at it: though they had seen many of his works, and were now expecting somewhat of this from him, yet it surpasses their expectation, and strikes them into admiration, to see a man, a man subject to weariness and sleep, and yet that man awaking to still the wind and seas with the word of his mouth. Oh! the greatness of the Lord whom we serve, the sovereign of sea and land, commanding all with a word, desperate diseases, blasting winds, raging seas, and tormenting devils!

*And there was a great calm.* This often happens in his church after such storms as threatened shipwreck. And so in a soul, when all within (and these are the worst storms) is full of confusion and noises, the heart working like a troubled sea, and finding no rest neither from its own persuasions, nor the skilfullest speeches of others, but, amid all, likely to be swallowed up or split in pieces; then, then, one word from Christ's mouth quiets all presently, and makes the soul calmer and smoother than the stillest water in the fairest day. Oh, what wonder and love will possess the soul that hath found any such thing!

Ver. 28–34. *And when he was come to the other side, into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils.*] The following history hath many things of very useful remark; but those things offer themselves to all that read it. We may see the great malice of Satan, and the great power and goodness of Jesus Christ, and the great baseness and brutishness of the men of this place, here spoken of. Satan's malice appears in the men possessed, carrying them to run wild among tombs, and to commit outrage upon them who passed by, and then, apprehending their dispossession thence, to desire to go into the swine of that place, and destroying them, which was their design upon the men, as the event proved. He who had the power, and graciously used it, to cast them out of the possessed men, was not tied to their suit as a point of capitulation. He could have cast them quite out of their coasts, and sent them back immediately to their own prison; but in Divine wisdom and justice, he grants their suit, knowing well what use they would make of it, and what would follow.

But oh! the Gadarenes themselves were the swine, viler than those the devils entered and drowned; yea, they were worse possessed than the swine, and drowned in a more fearful deep, by the craft of those devils. And that was their plot. The devils, knowing how fast the hearts of the owners were linked to their swine, thought it likely that the swine being drowned, they would follow, would drown themselves in the rejecting of Jesus Christ. And they did so. How many who read or hear this with indignation, yet, possibly, do little better in their hearts—cleaving to their herds, or other goods, gains, or pleasures, or anything of this earth, and in the love of these, refusing Jesus Christ! Think it not a harsh word, but take heed that ye be not such; for of the multitudes to whom Christ is offered, there are very few whose hearts do really open to him, and receive him. But oh, happy they that do! This was the clearest instance of perfect misery, and yet, they were scarcely at all to be pitied, being the choosers and devisers of it themselves: *they besought Jesus to depart*, that is, besought life and blessedness to go from them. And what does a sinner, when he turns out and rejects motions and inspirations of holiness, lest his lusts and pleasures of sin should be lost, but dismiss Jesus, lest the swine should be drowned?

## CHAPTER IX.

VER. 1. And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.

HE who measures the waters in the hollow of his hand, and commands them (as ch. v. 26), is ferried over in some boat or small vessel. And was it not richly laden with this inestimable pearl, *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, all fulness* dwelling in him? All the rich ships from both the Indies, were not to be compared to this.

Ver. 2. *And behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy.*] The other evangelists tell with what difficulty they did so, and how they overcame that difficulty with resolution and industry, which indeed overcome all. A strong bent toward Jesus Christ will not be hindered. Nor is their violence in uncovering the house, or their rudeness in interrupting his discourse, rejected or reproved, but all is accepted for the principle, *faith*, which was tempered with love to the sick, and even to Jesus Christ, as the person from whom they expected the cure.

*And Jesus seeing their faith.*] It is needless to dispute that one may be benefited by the influence of another's faith. Surely, much may be done by it. Thus, it may bring and present a person, may recommend, may pray for him, and may be respected in the grant of mercy, not only in temporals, but in spirituals. But yet, *the just* lives only *by his* own *faith*, which no doubt this poor man had. For the word, *theirs*, excludes not, but rather includes the sick man's, who no doubt consented to this course in the same confidence. But yet, it is good to be in believing people's company. Another person, a

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family, a city, a society, may fare the better for the faith of an individual. Often, one who prays in a family, averts judgments, and draws down blessings upon the whole.

—*Said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.*] This, though not appearing to be the errand, was yet the most important part of the cure, the root of blessings and blessedness, removing the root of all care and misery. Whether the sick man did most of all, or did at all desire, or expect this at the hands of Jesus Christ, we can not tell; but if he thought not of it (and we see no other), oh, what a surprise of love! It is good, coming to Jesus on any terms, on any errand. Some come, driven by outward afflictions, and yet return delivered from sin and eternal death. In this respect, there is great variety in this matter of declaring a pardon. Some seek and knock, and wait long, and hear it not. Others are prevented, who scarcely sought it, but Christ's first word to them is this. But all is one as to the main: they who seek it with sorrow, shall be sure to find it with joy; and they who first find it without previous sorrow, shall yet be sure to find that sorrow for sin, in some measure, likewise, after pardon, if not before. And truly it seems sweetest and kindliest, when mercy melts the heart. But well may he say, *be of good courage*, who could add this, *thy sins be forgiven thee.* Oh! what can dismay after this? The heart, wholly filled with divine peace and love, bears up all, and sorrow is turned into joy before a soul thus assured. Jesus knew well, that the healing of his palsy, without this pardon, had been but a lame cure, only the half, and the far less, the meaner half. This was the main business that brought him down from heaven to be a man, and to dwell among men, and that made him die for man; that which nailed him to the cross, and drew forth his heart's blood: it was for the remission of the sins of many. These cures of bodily diseases, though clear demonstrations of Christ's Divine power and goodness, were but a transient appendage and symbol of that mainly intended and highest mercy, *the forgiveness of sins.*

The sentence of eternal death standing in full force above the head of an unpardoned sinner, if it were lively apprehended, oh! what a paralytic trembling would it strike the soul into, causing the joints of it to shake and smite one upon another, in the midst of its fullest health and mirth, as the hand-writing on the wall did that drunken king Belshazzer. But we know not what sin is, though we hear and speak of it, and sometimes confess it; and therefore our hearts leap not at the report of a pardon, though we hear of it, and usually entreat it. Any of you, when complaining that you are robbed, or spoiled of your goods, would scarcely think it to the purpose were I to tell you, *your sins are pardoned.* But oh! how fit a word it is to answer and drown all griefs; so pertinent that nothing besides it is so! And happy that soul that hears it from his mouth who gives it, and who alone can ascertain it. This is the answer that will satisfy. If thou sayest, "I am diseased;" ay, but thy sin is pardoned. "I am poor;" ay, but thy sin is pardoned. And surely, a soul that heeds it right, will be quieted, and will be bold, of *good courage*, as the word here is, and will embrace all other burdens, and go light under them; will say, "Lord, now let me live, or let me die, let me abound or want, let me be healthy or sick, take away what thou wilt, or lay on what thou wilt, all is well; thou hast pardoned my sin."

Ver. 3. *And behold certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.*] Supposing Jesus but a man, yet, there was no necessity for this construction. He was a holy man, a singular, extraordinary man, doing unparalleled miracles; and he said not, *I forgive thy sins*, but *Thy sins are forgiven thee;* which was a word not beyond the capacity of a prophetical power to say it declaratively. And though there was an air of authority, might they not have thought, This may be the Messiah, who they knew was to come, and was to be the Son of God, and to bring remission of sins along with him? But that base spirit, the spirit of envy, with which they were filled, willingly rejects all better sort of constructions, and fastens on the absolutely worst it can invent. To an eye that looks through the dark glass of prejudice and malice, all is discolored. Yet they are struck with so much awe, that they dare not speak it out. That which struck them was, they were obscured by his brightness. They were *animalia gloriæ*, as one calls the philosophers, and could not endure to go less in the opinion they had gained: a sore mischief, and one much attaching to known and venerable possession. *Genus irritabile vatum.*

But a spirit devoted to HIM whose due all glory is, willingly resigns it to him, in what way he will. Let whoso will be best or chief, so that still he be chief of all, and glorified in all. The holy Baptist had another spirit than these rabbies: he told it freely and gladly, *He must increase, but I must decrease.* It was his end, as the morning star is willingly drowned in the brightness of the rising sun.

Ver. 4. *And Jesus knowing their thoughts.*] This, without anything further, was clearly enough to demonstrate his Divine power. Oh! that this was ever in our thoughts, that all our thoughts are under his eye! If they were so, and we know them to be so, to some grave, wise man, how wary, and choice should we be of them? And shall we have less regard to the holiest and wisest Lord, to whom they are all naked and open?

*Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?*] There was no reason in the thing, but the reason was, their hearts were evil, and thei

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emissions like themselves. An evil heart is an incessant forge of evil thoughts. It is a corrupt spring still issuing forth, and till it be renewed, it can not find any other. *From the heart come evil thoughts:* that is in the front of all the black train that comes forth of the heart, as our Savior teaches, Matt. xv. 19. These are the seeds of all the wickedness that fills the world. Chief regard, therefore, is to be had to the *heart*. An excellent advice that of Solomon, *Keep thy heart with all diligence*. To amend some evil customs, without the renewing of the heart, is but to lop the branches that will grow again, or others in their stead; but a holy heart meditates on holy things, is still in heaven, is all reverence toward God, and meekness and charity to men.

Ver. 5. *Whether it is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and walk?*] Though the remission of sins flows originally from the same power, and so is equal, and in its own place hath the preference, being by far the greater mercy, yet the other of bodily cure runs into the senses, and so both is more evident to the beholders, and affects them more. The other word might be spoken with less control, the efficacy or inefficacy of it not falling under the cognition of them that heard it; but this of healing the palsy, would either be attested or denied in the effect.

Ver. 6. *But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins.*] Now he asserts a peculiar power of forgiving sin. Though a man walking on the earth as the rest, yet, in testimony of the divine power, *He saith to the sick of the palsy*—this apostrophe maketh the proof more lively, joining presently the real experiment of that miraculous cure—*Arise, take up thy bed*. That word which gave being to the world, what is hard to it? And in the case of spiritual deadness, soul-palsy, no more is necessary than a word from his mouth, and it shall be lively and strong; it shall skip and *leap*. Isa. xxxv. 6. Lord, speak that word! And indeed, wheresoever he pardons sin, he withal makes the soul able and nimble, to *run in the way of his commandments;* to carry its bed, that before carried it: to command and wield at pleasure those low things wherein it rested.

Ver. 8. *But when the multitude saw it they marvelled.*] *They feared*, says St. Luke. A gracious work it was, yet so full of wonder, that it struck them with a kind of fear. *And they glorified God*. Thus shall he break out, and shine bright in his works, when most opposed by evil men. Yet they knew him not well, but took him for an extraordinary man only. But thus he was pleased to be known by degrees, and to rise as the morning light. It is a common presumption, and generally that of the least knowing, to think that they have the true and full sense of the articles of religion; and that presumption is commonly accompanied with this precipitancy, that we would constrain all to know and believe, at once, without delay, whatsoever we think and believe. *Who had given such power unto men*. But had they known this honor given unto men, that this man was God, they would have wondered much more. And if he was so astonishingly wonderful in healing a sick man, how wonderful shall he be in raising the dead! And if in his lowness his power was admired, how much more shall all admire that power which shall then be given him, when the *man, Christ*, shall come in the brightness of his glory, to judge the world!

Ver. 9. *And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom.*] He stayed no long time upon earth, but he lost no part of that time. Every step to us is a wonder of goodness. And here is a cure which the evangelist ingenuously relates as done upon himself, which was no less, if not more wonderful than that performed upon the paralytic; and done as easily and quickly by the same means, a word spoken.

*He saw a man named Matthew*. He loves first, and spies first, when we think on nothing less than him; as he says to Nathanael: *Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee*. And this seeing of Matthew was no casual, but a designed sight, proceeding from a former sight, like unto that of Nathanael; and is the sight of his foreknowing and forechoosing love. So even this very sight of his calling and converting power did prevent Matthew, while he thought of no such thing, and would have let Jesus pass, being so intent upon his busy employment, as either not to have seen him at all, or to have taken no notice of him.

*Sitting at the receipt of custom*. This is the common case, the posture of called sinners. While they are thinking of no such thing, but altogether drowned in other desires and cares (even at the church, their hearts are often more in their shops, or fields, or any earthly business they are engaged in), their very hearts being a little customhouse, such a crowd and noise of cares and vanities, as there is usually of people in a customhouse, He who hath their names in his book of life, at his appointed time glances at them, by a powerful look cast on them, and, by a word spoken to them, draws them to himself; and that without minding any previous worth or congruous disposition in them, more than in others; yea, finding them in a more indisposed temper and posture, possibly, than many others who are not called, as the evangelist here freely and humbly declares of himself, speaking out his calling, and his busy diligence in it, in the very instant that he is called from it. Observe, likewise, his expressing of his common name, Matthew; whereas the other evangelist, in the recital of this story, gives him that other name which was the more honorable, Levi. *Sitting at the receipt of custom*, a profession of great gain, but little credit among the Jews; and though, possibly,

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not utterly unlawful in the nature of it, yet, so generally corrupt in the exercise and management of it; like some other callings, which, though a man can not absolutely determine them to be unlawful, are yet seldom or never lawfully and spotlessly discharged. Therefore, the Jews shunned the very society of publicans (tax-gatherers) as a wicked, execrable kind of men, and did in a manner necessitate them to converse with the worst sort of persons, as being expelled and generally avoided by all others; so that you find them here, ver. 10, and usually in the gospel, linked together, *publicans* and *sinners*, that is, noted, nefarious sinners, such as harlots, and other scandalously vicious persons. Yet from this stained and ill-reputed calling, is Matthew called by the holy Lord, to follow him. As he called poor fishermen, and made them *fishers of men*, to catch men, to save them by their net spread, the word of life preached, so he calls a rich publican to be a gatherer-in of his tribute and treasure in the world, the souls of chosen sinners, by the publication of the gospel.

No rank of men is so low, as to be below the condescension of his choice and grace; and none are so remote, in the reputed or real iniquity of their station or person, as to be without the extent and reach of his saving hand. And he is pleased to give instances of this in choosing whom he will, and making them what he will, that *no flesh may glory before him*, but that all flesh may glorify him, whom no unworthiness or unfitness can prejudice, either in the freedom of his grace in choosing them, or in the power of his grace in changing the mind and fitting them for for what he calls them to. He hath no need, nor takes notice of our rules, nor judges according to our thoughts. Not only have we here a publican, but afterward a persecutor, made a most eminent preacher and apostle of Jesus Christ. And his choice and calling wipes out the stain of all preceding sin, though the persons themselves do readily acknowledge it on all occasions, as St. Paul often does, and St. Matthew does here. And indeed it is sincerity and humility for them who are converted, at a great distance of time so to do. But for others to object to them, after their conversion, either the meanness or the sinfulness of their former lives, were great uncharity and folly: it were to reckon up to men that which God hath blotted out, who alone is interested in the account.

Herein God is wonderful, who seizeth on some persons in the midst of youthful dissipations, or violent pursuits of the world, and purifies them for himself; makes them not only vessels of honor, but of the first rank, to bear his name to others; makes them eminently holy, gives them great abilities, and which is the top of all abilities, ardent love, and mighty affection for his service. His Spirit, that holy fire, refines gross earth into the pureness of transparent glass, to be the inlet of light to his people.

Now, why is this one taken from the customhouse, and so many others left, both there and elsewhere, round about him? This is *arcanum imperii*, a *state secret*: no reason is to be expected but his good pleasure. Why is such a poor creature in a cottage chosen, and great palaces passed by? Why are simple and unlettered persons taught the mysteries of heaven, and great wits left to evaporate themselves upon vain loves, and other like follies? Why in the same house is one chosen and called, and it may be a servant, and the rest passed by? Nothing can be given in answer but this: *Even so, Father, because it pleaseth thee.*

*And he saith unto him, Follow me.*] I am not of the mind of a grave interpreter who thinks there were other words added to persuade him, though not related. I am somewhat confident that there was no more said at all, this being our Savior's usual word of calling others in the same way, and so powerful a word and of such mighty influence, that there was no resisting it. *He arose and followed him.* No chains so strong to hold an earthly mind, as those of gold and silver. He was here in the midst of them, and very heavy ones they were, no doubt; yet, the word makes the soul break loose with a marvellous force from all. Some apprehend (as well they may), there was an attractive power in the amiable Jesus who here called him; but surely the word had of his divine power in it, and reached the heart, and could not be resisted, and drew more strongly than all the receipts, and gains, and involved business of his profession, which could not hold him back. So Elijah but cast his mantle upon Elisha in passing, and he followed. *What have I done to thee?* said he. Nothing to look at, yet enough to constrain him to leave all and follow him. So it is in the conversion of any sinners; no weights nor bolts can hold them: they must follow a commanding word, such as that which, in the creation, causes that to be that it commands; a magnetic touch of Jesus Christ, speaking in a word to the heart, so that it must follow him. Oh! happy souls that have felt it!

Ver. 10–13. *And as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came, and sat down with him, and his disciples.*] The other evangelists tell that it was in Matthew's house, and at a great feast which he made; this himself does not mention. This feast he made both as a respectful entertainment to his new Master, and as a civil farewell to his old friends, and fellow publicans: and possibly he took the confidence to invite them together with Jesus Christ, hoping that his presence and company might have likewise some happy influence upon some of them; and it is likely divers of them came uninvited, out of a desire to see Jesus, having heard of this his sudden and powerful withdrawing of one who, no doubt, was a prime man among them. However, the mild and gracious Jesus refuses neither

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the feast nor the company, condescending to the most ordinary customs of life, and in these things affecting nothing of austerity and singularity; and he chose this compliant way as most suitable to his design: *He became like us in all things, excepting sin.*

But all along, the spirit of pharisaical envy follows him, and lies at the catch for an advantage. Here it seemed fair for them. They accost not himself with it, but his disciples, hoping more easily to unsettle them of their opinion of their Master: How is this? He calls you to follow him as to some eminent way of sanctity, and leads you unto feasting and good cheer, and that with the refuse and impurest sort of men, *publicans* and *sinners.* Jesus takes on him the answer, as alone able to give it home. Why? What wonder you to see me in such company? Why, where should a man be, but where his business lies? Were it strange to find a physician in an hospital or infirmary, or anywhere among the sick? Here is my work and great employment; and you might have read a word applicable to this purpose: *I will have mercy and not sacrifice;* that is, rather than sacrifice, or any ceremonial observance, such as this you urge, of abhorring the society of such persons, substantial goodness and duties of compassion and love. And instead of squinting on what you see, go think on this. You have read it likely, but do not well understand it; study better what it means. Meanwhile know this, that I am prosecuting the great design of my coming into the world, while I am in such company. *I came to call not the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* Not the righteous; either them that conceit themselves such, as you do, or any that are really converted already and religious. My present business is not so much with them, as to restore the ungodly, *to call sinners to repentance.*

I will not now speak of the rules and qualifications of using or avoiding the converse of unholy persons; but doubtless there lies much, we shall find, as in this instance, in the due consideration of the persons on both sides, what hope there may be of reclaiming them, and what safety of not being corrupted by them, lest, while we think to pull them out of the mire, they drag us into it. Here there was none of that danger at all, and there was the highest power for converting; and the persons, even by coming so willingly where he was, seem not to have been the most obstinate and incorrigible. But we should reflect well on ourselves in this case, that our intention be suitable to this, and that we be in some measure hopeful to be able to accomplish, before we attempt such a thing: otherwise it will prove fool-hardiness, to adventure much of this kind.

But this is the great comfort of sinners, this word: *I came to call not the righteous, but sinners.* What can a diffident heart say, that it should not come to Jesus Christ? Art thou a sinner, an eminent sinner? Therefore come to him, for he came to thee. It is such that he comes to seek—they are the very objects of his grace. He had nothing else to do in the world but to save such; he came on purpose for their sakes. His very name tells it: *He shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.* It is so far from being a just hinderance, that it is the only title to his favorable intentions, that thou art a sinner. Were it not strange if one should say, I am sick, very sick, therefore I will not make an address to the physician? And to say, I am a sinner, and a great one, therefore I dare not go to the Savior of sinners, would be equally strange. Oh, no; therefore I will go: he came for me; I am sure he is able to heal me—ought to be the language of all such.

But though this is a great encouragement to sinners, it is no encouragement at all to sin. He came to call sinners, but it is to call them to repentance. This the whole gospel, and all the doctrine of grace, still presses. If thou bring thy sins to Jesus Christ, as thy malady and misery, to be cured of them, and delivered from them, it is well; but to come with them as thy beloved darlings and delight, thinking still to retain them and receive him, thou mistakest him grossly, and miserably deludest thyself. He came forth from God, to restore souls to God, in order to make us *partakers* of his *Divine nature.* The great intendment of the blessed Jesus, and the great redemption he wrought is, to separate our hearts and sin. We know him not, if we take it otherwise. And this says clearly, that though he hath come to us, and stretched forth his hands long among us, few of us are come to him. Oh! how few have trod on the neck of their beloved sin, to come to Jesus Christ! This is the great, deplorable wretchedness of the land: not the losses and ravages of war; not the loss of civil liberty, or anything else that way; this is it—Unrepentance. We turn not by being smitten with the sharpest rod: we turned not by being invited with tender mercies. Look on such as have been suffering at home, or wandering abroad; what change has been wrought on our hearts? What imports who do, or do not, rule over us, while our unworthy lusts and passions still do? If spoiled and poor, and without Christ too, then we are poor indeed; oh, pitiful poor! Yea, if thou escape many things that light sadly on others, yet, if thou hast not escaped the dominion of sin, and that curse of death that cleaves to it, oh, wretched caitiff! Think what Jesus came and died for—what we live for—and what is our great business on this earth—that our sins should die before us. He came to call the earthly to heavenly-mindedness and heavenly conversation; to call the unclean to purity; to call the passionate and furious to meekness; to call the proud to humility. Oh, answer this call. Give him the desire of his heart, and he will certainly give thee thine.

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# SERMONS.

## SERMON I.

### HEAVENLY WISDOM.

MANY and great are the evils that lodge within the heart of man, and they come forth abundantly both by the tongue and by the hand, yet the heart is not emptied of them; yea, the more it vents them outwardly, the more they increase within. Well might HE who knows the heart so well, call it an *evil treasure*. We find the prophet Ezekiel, in his eighth chapter, led by the Lord in vision to Jerusalem, to view the sins of the Jews who remained there in the time of the captivity: when he had showed him one abomination, he caused him to dig through the wall, to enter and discover more, and so directed him several times, from one place to another, and still said, *I will show thee yet greater abominations*. Thus it is with those whom the Lord leads into an examination of their own hearts (for men are usually strangers to themselves), by the light of his word, and his Spirit going before them: he lets them see heaps of abominations in every room, and the vilest in the most retired and darkest corners. And truly, should he leave them there, they would despair of remedy. No; he makes this discovery on purpose that they should sue to him for help. Do so, then, as many of you as have taken any notice of the evils of your own hearts. Tell the Lord, those hearts are his own work: *He formed the heart of man within him*. And they are his own choice too: *My son, give me thy heart*. Entreat him to redress all those abuses wherewith Satan and sin have filled it, and then to take possession of it himself, for therein consists its happiness. This is, or should be, a main end of our resortings to his house and service. Wrong not yourselves so far as to turn these serious exercises of religion into an idle divertisement. What a happiness were it, if every time you come to his solemn worship, some of your strongest sins did receive a new wound, and some of your weakest graces a new strength!

JAMES iii. 17.

**But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.**

*God doth know, that in the day that ye shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil*, was the first hissing of that old serpent, by which he poisoned mankind in the root. Man, not contented with the impression of God's image, in which he was created, lost it by catching at a shadow. Climbing higher than his station, he fell far below it: seeking to be more than man, to become as God, he made himself less than man. *He lodged not a night in honor, but became as the beasts that perish*. Psalm xlix. 12. Ever since, nature's best wisdom is full of impurity, turbulency, and distemper; nor can anything rectify it, but a *wisdom from above*, that both cleanseth and composeth the soul: *it is first pure, and then peaceable*.

This epistle, as some that follow, is called *general*, both by reason of the dispersion of the parties to whom it is addressed, and the universality of the subject which it treats; containing a great number (if not all) of the necessary directions and comforts of a Christian's life, both for the active and the passive part of it. It is evident that the apostle's main design is, to arm the dispersed Jews against all kinds of temptations—both those of *affliction*, in the first chapter, at the 2d verse, and *sinful temptations*, verse 13th. And having discoursed of two special means of strengthening them against both—*speaking to God in prayer*, and *hearing God speak in his word*—in the last two verses of that first chapter, he recommends, as chief duties of religion, and sure evidences of integrity in religion, first, *meekness* and *moderation*, chiefly in their *speeches*, and then, *charity* and *purity* in their *actions*; insisting largely upon the latter, in the second chapter, and upon the former, the ruling of the *tongue*, in the third chapter: and here, toward the end of it, he shows the true opposite springs of miscarriage in speech and action, and of right ordering and regulating of both. Evil conversation, strifes, and envyings, are the fruits of a base wisdom that is *earthly, sensual*, and *devilish*, ver. 15th; but *purity, meekness*, and *mercy*, are the proper effects and certain signs of heavenly wisdom.

*The wisdom that is from above is first pure*: its gentleness can agree with anything except *impurity*. Then it is *peaceable*—it offends nobody, except *purity* offend them. It is not raging and boisterous. It is not only *pure*, being void of that mire and dirt which the wicked are said to cast out like the sea (Isa. lvii. 20), but *peaceable* likewise, not swelling, and restless like the sea, as is there said of the wicked. Nor is it only *peaceable* negatively, *not offending*, but as the word bears



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[εἰρηνική] *pacific*, disposed to make and seek peace. And as it readily offends none, so it is not easily offended. It is *gentle* and *moderate*, [ἐπιεικής], and if offended, [εὐπειθής], *easily entreated* to forgive. And as it easily passeth by men's offences, so it doth not pass by, but looks upon their distresses and wants—as full of compassion as it is free from unruly and distempered passions. Nor rests it in an affected sympathy; its *mercy* is helpful—*full of mercy and good fruits*. And it both forgives and pities, and gives *without partiality, and without hypocrisy*: [ἀδιάκριτος καὶ ἀνυπόκριτος]. The word ἀδιάκριτος may as well bear another sense, no less suiting both with this wisdom, and these its other qualities; that is, *not taking upon it a censorious discerning, and judging of others*. They that have most of this wisdom, are least rigid to those that have less of it. I know no better evidence of strength in grace, than to bear much with those that are weak in it. And lastly, as it spares the infirmities of others, so it makes not false and vain shows of its own excellencies; it is *without hypocrisy*. This denies two things, both *dissimulation* and *ostentation*. The art of *dissembling* or *hypocrite-craft*, is no part of this wisdom. And for the other, *ostentation*, surely the air of applause is too light a purchase for solid wisdom. The works of this wisdom may be seen, yea, they should be seen, and possibly be now and then commended; but they should not be done for that low end, either to be seen or to be commended. Surely not, being of so noble extraction. This wisdom having descended from heaven, will be little careful for the estimation of those that are of the earth, and are but too often of the earth, earthly.

The due order of handling these particulars more fully can not well be missed. Doubtless, the *subject* (*wisdom from above*) requires our first consideration; next, the *excellent qualities* that are attributed to it; and lastly, their *order* is to be considered, the rather because so clearly expressed, *first pure, then peaceable*, &c.

*Wisdom from above.*] There be two things in that: there is the general term of *wisdom*, common to divers sort of wisdom, though most eminently and truly belonging to this best wisdom; then there is the *birth* or *original* of this wisdom, serving as its difference to specify and distinguish it from all the rest —*wisdom from above*. Wisdom, in the general, is a very plausible word among men. Who is there that would not willingly pass for wise? Yea, often those that are least of all such, are most desirous to be accounted such; and where this fails them, they usually make up that want in their own conceit and strong opinion. Nor do men only thus love the reputation of wisdom, but they naturally desire to be wise, as they do to be happy: yet, through corrupt nature's blindness, they do as naturally mistake and fall short both of the one and the other; and being once wrong, the more progress they make, they are farther out of the way, and pretending to wisdom in a false way, they still befool themselves, as the apostle speaks, Rom. i. 22: φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοὶ ἐμωράνθησαν. *Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools.*

Our apostle, ver. 15, speaking of that wicked wisdom that is fruitful of wrongs, strifes, and debates, and that is only abusively to be called *wisdom*, shows what kind of wisdom it is, by three notable characters, *earthly, natural*, and *devilish*; which though they be here jointly attributed to one and the same subject, yet we may make use of them to signify some differences of false wisdom. There is an *infernal*, or *devilish wisdom*, proper for contriving cruelties and oppressions, or subtle shifts and deceits that make atheism a main basis and pillar of state policy: such as those *that devise mischief upon their beds*. &c. Mic. ii. 1. This is a *serpentine wisdom*, not joined with, but most opposite to the *dove-like simplicity*. There is an *earthly wisdom* that draws not so deep in impiety as the other, yet is sufficient to keep a man out of all acquaintance with God and Divine matters, and is drawing his eye perpetually downward, employing him in the pursuit of such things as can not fill the soul, except it be with anguish and vexation. *By thy great wisdom, and by thy traffic hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches.* Ezek. xxviii. 5. That dexterity of gathering riches, where it is not attended with the Christian art of rightly using them, abases men's souls, and indisposes them wholly for this *wisdom that is from above*. There is a *natural wisdom* far more plausible than the other two, more harmless than that hellish wisdom, and more refined than that earthly wisdom, yet no more able to make man holy and happy than they are: *Natural*, ψυχική, it is the word the Apostle St. Paul useth. 1 Cor. ii. ἄνθρωπος ψυχικός, naming the *natural man* by his better part, his soul: intimating that the soul, even in the highest faculty of it, the understanding, and that in the highest pitch of excellency to which nature can raise it, is blind in spiritual objects. Things that are above, can not be known but by a *wisdom from above*. Nature neither affords this wisdom, nor can it of itself acquire it. There is to advertise us, that we mistake not *morality and common knowledge*, even of Divine things, for *the wisdom that is from above*. That may raise a man high above the vulgar, as the tops of the highest mountains leave the valleys below them; yet is it still as far short of true supernatural wisdom, as the highest earth is of the highest sphere. There is one main point of the method of this wisdom that is of most hard digestion to a natural man, and the more natural wise he be, the worse he likes it: *If any man would be wise, let him become a fool that he may become wise*. 1 Cor. iii. 18. There is nothing gives nature a greater prejudice against re-

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ligion, than this initial point of self-denial. When men of eminent learning, or the strong politicians, hear that, if they will come to Christ, they must renounce their own wisdom to be fit for his, many of them go away as sorrowful as the young man when he heard of selling all his goods and giving them to the poor.

Jesus Christ is that eternal and substantial WISDOM that came from above, to deliver men from perishing in their affected folly, as you find it at large in Prov. viii. St. Paul, in the first chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, calls him *the wisdom of God*, ver. 24; that shows his excellency in himself: and ver. 30, he tells us that *he is made of God our wisdom;* that shows his usefulness to us. And by him alone is this infused wisdom from above conveyed to us. *In him are the hid treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, Col. ii. 3; and *from his fulness*, if at all, *we all receive grace for grace;* and of all graces, first some measures of this wisdom, without which no man can know himself, much less can he know God.

Now this supernatural wisdom hath in it both speculation and prudence; it is contemplative and practical: these two must not be separated. *I wisdom dwell with prudence.* Prov. viii. 12. This wisdom, in its contemplative part, reads Christ much, and discovers in him a new world of hidden excellencies unknown to this old world. There are *treasures of wisdom in him*, but they are *hid*, and no eye sees them, but that which is enlightened with thy wisdom. No, it is impossible, as one says (Sophocles), τὰ θεῖα γνῶναι ἀφυστορος θεοῦ, *to know Divine things while God concealeth them.* But when the renewed understanding of a Christian is once initiated into this study, it both grows daily more and more apprehensive, and Christ becomes more communicative of himself, and makes the soul more acquainted with the amiable countenance of his Father in him reconciled. *No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.* John i. 18. What wonder if the unlettered and despised Christian knows more of the mysteries of heaven, than the naturalist, though both wise and learned? Christ admits the believer into his bosom, and *he* is in the bosom of the Father. But withal know, that all this knowledge, though speculatively high, yet descends to practice: as it learns what God is, so it thence teacheth man, what he should be. This wisdom flows from heaven, and a heavenly conversation flows from it; as we find it there characterized by those practical graces of *purity, peace, meekness*, &c.

This wisdom represents to us, the *purity* of God's nature. 1 John iii. 3. It gives the soul an eye to see the comeliness and beauty of *purity:* as the philosopher said of virtue, to the end it might be loved, he would wish no more but that it could be seen. And as it thus morally persuades, so, by an insensible virtue, it assimilates the soul to Christ, by frequent contemplation. It also produces all the motives to holiness and obedience; it begets these precious qualities in the soul. It giveth a Christian a view of the matchless virtues that are in Christ, and stirs him up to a diligent, though imperfect imitation of them. It sets before us Christ's spotless *purity*, in whose mouth there was no guile, and so invites us to *purity*. It represents the perpetual calmness of his spirit, that no tempest could reach to disturb it: *In his mouth there was no contentious noise, his voice was not heard in the streets;* and this recommends *peaceableness*, and *gentleness*. And so in the rest here mentioned.

Hence, I conceive, may be fitly learned for our use, that seeing here is a due wisdom and knowledge necessary for guidance and direction in the ways of *purity* and *peace*, it is evident that gross ignorance can not consist with the truth of religion, much less can it be a help and advantage to it. I shall never deny that a false, superstitious religion stands in need of it: "Not too much scripture wisdom for the people." The pomp of that vain religion, like court masks, shows best by candlelight. Fond nature likes it well: the day of spiritual wisdom would discover its imposture too clearly. But to let their foul devotion pass (for such it must needs be that is born of so black a mother as ignorance), let this *wisdom* at least be *justified of* those that pretend to be *her children*. It is lamentable that among us, where knowledge is not withheld, men should, through sloth and love of darkness, deprive themselves of it. What abundance of almost brutish ignorance is among the commons! and thence arise uncleanness, and all manner of wickedness: a darkness that both hides and increaseth impurity. What is the reason of so much impiety and iniquity in all places, but the want of the knowledge of God? *Not knowing Jesus Christ*, and *not obeying his gospel*, are joined together. Hosea iv. 1, 2; 2 Thess. i. 8. It will be found true, that where there is no obedience, there is no right knowledge of Christ. But out of all question, where there is not a competency of knowledge, there can be no obedience. And as these two lodge together, to observe what attends them both. *He shall come in flaming fire to render vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

And if there be any that think to shroud unpunished among the thickets of ignorance, especially amidst the means of knowledge, take notice of this; though it may hide the deformity of sin from your own sight for a time, it can not palliate it from the piercing eye, nor cover it from the revenging hand of Divine Justice. As you would escape, then, that wrath to come, come to wisdom's school, and how simple soever ye be as to this world, if you would not perish with the world, learn to be *wise unto salvation.*

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And truly, it is mainly important for this effect, that the ministers of the gospel be active and dexterous in imparting this wisdom to their people. If they would have their conversation to be holy, and peaceable, and fruitful, &c., the most expedient way is at once to principle them well in the fundamentals of religion; for therein is their great defect. How can they walk evenly and regularly, so long as they are in the dark? One main thing is, to be often pointing at the way to Christ, the fountain of this wisdom. Without this, you bid them be clothed, and clothe them not.

How needful then is it, that pastors themselves be *seers* indeed, as the prophets were called of old; not only faithful but *wise* dispensers, as our Savior speaks, Luke xii. 42, that they be διδακτικοὶ, *able and apt to teach.* 1 Tim. iii. 2. Laudable is the prudence that tries much the churches' storehouses, the seminaries of learning; but withal, it is not to be forgot, that as a due furniture of learning is very requisite for this employment, so it is not sufficient. When one is duly enriched that way, there is yet one thing wanting, that grows not in schools: except this infused *wisdom from above* season and sanctify all other endowments, they remain κοιναὶ common and unholy, and therefore unfit for the sanctuary. Among other weak pretences to Christ's favor in the last day, this is one, *We have preached in thy name;* yet says Christ, *I never knew you.* Surely, then, they know not him, and yet they preached him. Cold and lifeless (though never so fine and well contrived) must those discourses be, that are of an *unknown Christ.* Pastors are called angels, and therefore, though they use the secondary helps of knowledge, they are mainly to bring their message from above, from the fountain, the head of this pure wisdom.

*Pure.*] If it come *from above*, it must needs be *pure originally;* yea, it is *formally pure* too, being a main trait of God's renewed image in the soul. By this wisdom, the understanding is both refined and strengthened to entertain right conceptions of God in his nature and works. And this is primarily necessary, that the mind be not infected with false opinions in religion. If the spring-head be polluted, the streams can not be pure. This is more important than men usually think, for a good life. But that which I suppose to be here chiefly intended, is, that it is *effectively* and *practically pure: it purifies the heart* (said of *faith*, Acts xv. 9, which, in some sense and acceptation, differs not much from this wisdom), and consequently, the words and actions that flow from the heart.

This *purity*, some render *chastity: The wisdom from above is chaste*, ἁγνὴ. The word is indeed often so taken, and includes that here, but it is too narrow a sense to restrict it to that only. It implies here, a universal detestation of all impurity, both of flesh and spirit, as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. vii. 1. Pride, self-love, profaneness of spirit, and irreligion, though they do not so properly pollute the body as carnal uncleanness, yet they do no less defile the soul, and make it abominable in the sight of God. Those apostate angels, called *unclean spirits*, are incapable of bodily defilement, though indeed they tempt and inveigle men to it; their own inherent pollutions must needs be spiritual, for they are spirits. *Idolatry* in Scripture, goes often under the name of *fornication* and *adultery;* and indeed these sins may mutually borrow and lend their names the one to the other; idolatry may well be called *spiritual unchastity*, and unchaste love, *carnal idolatry.* Earthly-mindedness likewise is an impurity of the soul: in the apostle's phrase, *covetousness* is *idolatry*, and so, a spiritual pollution; yea, it may well share with idolatry in its borrowed name, and be called adultery too, for it misbestows the soul's prime affection upon the creature, which right is God's peculiar due.

This purity that true wisdom works is contrary to all pollution. We know then in some measure *what* it is: it remains to inquire *where* it is; and there is the difficulty. It is far easier to describe it in itself, than to find it among men. *Who can say I have made my heart clean?* Proverbs xx. 9. Look upon the greatest part of mankind, and you may know at first sight, that purity is not to be looked for among them: they suffer it not to come near them, much less to dwell with them and within them; they hate the very semblance of it in others, and themselves delight in intemperance and all manner of licentiousness, like foolish children striving who shall go farthest into the mire. These can not say, they have *made clean their hearts*, for all their words and actions will belie them. If you come to the mere moralist, the world's *honest man*, and ask him, it may be he will tell you, he hath cleansed his heart; but believe him not. It will appear he is not yet cleansed, because he says he has done it himself; for (you know) there must be some other beside man at this work; again, he rising up no higher than nature, hath none of this heavenly *wisdom* in him, and therefore is without this *purity* too. But if you chance to take notice of some well-skilled hypocrite, everything you meet with makes you almost confident, that *there* is purity; yet, if he be strictly put to it, he may make some good account of the pains he hath taken to refine his tongue and his public actions, but he dares not say he hath *made clean his heart;* it troubles his peace to be asked the question. He never intended to banish sin, but to retire it to his innermost and best room, that so it might dwell unseen within him; and where then should it lodge but in his heart? Yet, possibly, because what is outward is so fair, and man can not look deeper to contradict him, he may embolden himself to say, he is inwardly suitable to his appearance; but there is a day at hand that shall, to his endless shame, at once discover

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both his secret impurity and his impudence in denying it.

After these, there follow a few despised and melancholy persons (at least as to outward appearance), who are almost always hanging down their heads, and complaining of abundant sinfulness. And surely, purity can not be expected in these who are so far from it by their own confession; yet the truth is, that such purity as is here below, will either be found to lodge among these, or nowhere. Be not deceived; think not that they who loath, and (as they can) flee from the unholiness of the world, are therefore taken with the conceit of their own holiness; but as their perfect purity of justification is by Christ's imputed righteousness, so likewise they will know, and do always acknowledge, that their inherent holiness is *from above* too, from the same fountain, Jesus Christ. The wisdom *from above* is pure; this is their engagement to humility, for it excludes vaunting and boasting; and beside that, it is imperfect, troubled and stained with sin, which is enough to keep them humble. Their daily sad experience will not suffer them to be so mistaken: their many faults of infirmity can not but keep them from this presumptuous fault. There is *a generation*, indeed, *that are pure in their own eyes*, but they are such as *are not washed from their filth*. Prov. xxx. 12. They that are washed, are still bewailing that they again contract so much defilement. The most purified Christians are they that are most sensible of their impurity. Therefore I called not this a universal freedom from pollution, but a universal detestation of it. They that are thus pure, are daily defiled with many sins, but they can not be in love with any sin at all, nor do they willingly dispense with the smallest sins, which a natural man either sees not to be sin (though his dim moonlight discover grosser evils), or, if he do not see them, yet he judges it too much niceness to choose a great inconvenience rather than a little sin. Again, they differ in another particular: a natural man may be so far in love with virtue after his manner, as to dislike his own faults, and resolve to amend them; but yet he would think it a great weakness to sit down and mourn for sin, *and to afflict his soul*, as the Scripture speaks. The Christian's repentance goes not so lightly; there is a great deal more work in it. There is not only *indignation* against impurity, but it proceeds to *revenge*, 2 Cor. vii. 11. The saints we read of in Scripture, were ashamed of their impurity, but never of their tears for it. Let the world enjoy their own thoughts, and account it folly, yet surely the Christian who delights in purity, seeing he can not be free from daily sin, when he retires himself at night, is then best contented when his eyes serve him most plentifully to weep out the stains of the by-past day; yet he knows withal that it is only his Redeemer's blood that takes away the guilt of them. This is the condition of those that are truly, though not fully cleansed from the pollutions of the world by the Spirit of wisdom and purity. What mean they, then, who would argue themselves out of this number, because they find yet much dross left, and that they are not so defecated and refined as they would wish to be? On the contrary, this hatred of pollution testifies strongly that the contrary of it, *purity*, is there; and though its beginnings be small, doubt not, it shall in the end be victorious. The *smoking of this flax* shows indeed that there is gross matter there, but it witnesseth likewise that there is fire in it too, and though it be little, we have Christ's own word for it, that it shall not be *quenched;* and if he favor it, no other power shall be able to quench it. You find not, indeed, absolute holiness in your persons, nor in your best performances, yet, if you breathe and follow after it, if the pulse of the heart beat thus, if the main current of your affections be toward purity, if sin be in you as your disease and greatest grief, and not as your delight, then, take courage: you are as pure as travellers can be; and notwithstanding that impure spirit, Satan, and the impurity of your own spirits, vex you daily with temptations, and often foil you, yet, in despite of them all, you shall arrive safe at home where perfection dwells.

*The wisdom from above is pure.*] Be ashamed, then, of your extreme folly, you that take pleasure in any kind of uncleanness. Especially, seeing God hath reformed and purged his house among us, you that are, or should be, his living temples, remain not unreformed. If you do, church-reformation will be so far from profiting you, that as a clearer light, it will but serve to make your impurity both more visible and more inexcusable. If you mean that the Holy Ghost should dwell with you, entertain him, avoiding both spiritual and fleshly pollutions. The word he used doth more particularly signify *chastity;* and certainly, wherever this *wisdom from above* is, this comely grace is one of her attendants Whatever any have been in times past, let all be persuaded henceforth to mortify all lustful and carnal affections. Know that there is more true and lasting pleasure in the contempt of unlawful pleasures, than in the enjoyment of them. Grieve not, then, the good Spirit of God with actions or speeches, yea, or with thoughts that are impure. The unholy soul, like the mystical Babylon, makes itself a cage of unclean birds, and a habitation of filthy spirits; and if it continues to be such, it must, when it dislodges, take up its habitation with cursed spirits for ever in utter darkness. But as for those that are sincerely and affectionately *pure*, that is, *pure in heart*, our Savior hath pronounced their begun happiness—*Blessed are they that are pure in heart*, and assured them of full happiness—*for they shall see God*. This wisdom is sent from heaven on purpose to guide the elect thither by the way of purity. And mark how

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well their reward is suited to their labor!—their frequent contemplating and beholding of God's purity as they could, while they were on their journey, and their laboring to be like him, shall bring them to sit down in glory, and to be for ever the pure beholders of that purest object. *They shall see God.* What this is, we can not tell you, nor can you conceive it; but walk heavenward in purity, and long to be there, where you shall know what it means: *For you shall see him as he is.*

*Now to that blessed Trinity be praise for ever!*

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## SERMON II.

### THE PATIENT AND DOCILE SUFFERER.

*I will return to my place,* saith the Lord by his prophet, *till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face. In their affliction they will seek me early.* Hos. v. 15. The Father of mercies hides himself from his children, not to lose them, but that they may seek him, and may learn, having found him, to keep closer by him than formerly. He threatens them, to keep them from punishment: if his threatening work submission, it is well; if not, he punishes them gently, to save them from destruction. He seeks no more but that they acknowledge their offence, and seek his face. Wonderful clemency! For who can forbear to confess multitudes of offences, who know themselves? And who can choose but seek thy face, who ever saw thy face, and who know thee? *In their affliction they will seek me early.* He that prays not till affliction comes and forces him to it, is very slothful; but he that prays not in affliction, is altogether senseless. Certainly, they that at this time are not more than ordinarily fervent in prayer, or do not at least desire and strive to be so, can not well think that there is any spiritual life within them. Surely it is high time to stir up ourselves to prayers and tears. All may bear arms in that kind of service. Weak women may be strong in prayer: and those tears wherein they usually abound upon other occasions, can not be so well spent as this way. Let them not run out in howlings and impatience, but bring them, by bewailing sins, private as well as public, to quench this public fire. And, ye men, yea, ye men of courage, account it no disparagement thus to weep. We read often of David's tears, which were no stain to his valor. That cloud which hangs over us, which the frequent vapors of our sins have made, except it dissolve and fall down again in these sweet showers of godly tears, is certainly reserved to be the matter of a dreadful storm. Be instant, every one, in secret, for the averting of this wrath, and let us now again unite the cries of our hearts for this purpose to our compassionate God, in the name and mediation of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Job xxxiv. 31, 32.

Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more.
That which I see not, teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.

The great sin, as well as the great misery of man, is, the forgetting of God; and the great end and use of his works and of his word, is, to teach us the right remembrance and consideration of him in all estates. These words do particularly instruct us in the application of our thoughts toward him in the time of affliction. The shortness and the various signification of the words used in the original, give occasion to some other readings and another sense of them. But this we have in our translation, being not only very profitable, but very congruous, both to the words of the primitive text, and to the contexture of the discourse, I shall keep to it, without dividing your thoughts by the mentioning of any other. Neither will I lead you so far about, as to speak of the great dispute of this book, and the question about it which is held. He that speaks here, though the youngest of the company, yet as a wise and calm-spirited man, closes all with a discourse of excellent temper, and full of grave, useful instructions, among which this is one.

*Surely it is meet to be said (or spoken) to God.*] This speaking to God, though it may be vocal, yet it is not necessarily nor chiefly so, but is always mainly, and may often be only, mental: without this, the words of the mouth, how well chosen and well expressed soever they be, are to God of no account or signification at all. But if the heart speak, even when there is not a word in the mouth, it is that he hearkens to, and regards that speech, though made by a voice that none hears but he, and in a language that none understands but he.

But it is a rare, unfrequent thing, this communing of the heart with God, speaking its thoughts to him concerning itself, and concerning him, and his dealings with it, and the purposes and intentions it hath toward him—which is the speech here recommended, and is that Divine exercise of meditation and soliloquy of the soul with itself and with God, hearkening what the Lord God speaks to us within us, and our hearts echoing and resounding his words (as Psalm xxvii. 8, 9), and opening to him our thoughts of them and of ourselves. Though they stand open, and he sees them all, even when we tell him not of them, yet, because he loves us, he loves to hear them of our own speaking: *Let me hear thy voice, for it is sweet;* as a father delights in the little stammering, lisping language of his beloved child. And if the reflex affection of children be in us, we shall love also to speak with *our* Father, and to

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ell him all our mind, and to be often with him in the entertainments of our secret thoughts.

But the most of men are little within: either they wear out their hours in vain discourse with others, or possibly vainer discourses with themselves. Even those who are not of the worst sort, and who, possibly, have their times of secret prayer, yet do not so delight to think of God, and to speak with him, as they do to be conversant in other affairs, and companies, and discourses, in which there is a great deal of froth and emptiness. Men think, by talking of many things, to be refreshed; and yet, when they have done, find that it is nothing, and that they had much better have been alone, or have said nothing. Our thoughts and speeches, in most things, run to waste, yea, are defiled; as water spilt on the ground is both lost, and can not be gathered up again, and is polluted, mingled with dust. But no word spoken to God, from the serious sense of a holy heart, is lost: he receives it, and returns it into our bosom with advantage. A soul that delights to speak to him, will find that he also delights to speak to it. And this communication, certainly, is the sweetest and happiest choice; to speak little with men, and much with God. One short word, such as this here, spoken to God in a darted thought, eases the heart more when it is afflicted, than the largest discourses and complainings to the greatest and powerfullest of men, or the kindest and most friendly. It gives not only ease, but joy, to say to God, *I have sinned, yet I am thine;* or, as here, *I have borne chastisement, I will no more offend.* The time of affliction is peculiarly a time of speaking to God; and such speech as this is peculiarly befitting such a time. And this is one great recommendation of affliction, that it is a time of wiser and more sober thoughts—a time of the returning of the mind inward and upward. A high place, fulness and pleasure, draw the mind more outward. Great light and white colors dissipate the sight of the eye, and the very thoughts of the mind too; and men find that the night is a fitter season for deep thoughts. *It is better,* says Solomon, *to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting.* Those blacks made the mind more serious. It is a rare thing to find much retirement unto God, much humility and brokenness of spirit, true purity and spirituality of heart, in the affluence and great prosperities of the world. It is no easy thing to carry a very full cup even, and to digest well the fatness of a great estate and great place. They are not to be envied who have them: even though they be of the better sort of men, it is a thousand to one but they shall be losers by the gains and advancements of this world, suffering proportionably great abatements of their best advantages, by their prosperity. The generality of men, while they are at ease, do securely neglect God, and little mind either to speak to him, or to hear him speak to them. God complains thus of his own people: *I spoke to them in their prosperity, and they would not hear.* The noises of coach-wheels, of their pleasures, and of their great affairs, so fill their ears, that the *still voice* wherein God is, can not be heard. *I will bring her into the wilderness, and there I will speak to her heart,* says God of his church. There the heart is more at quiet to hear God, and to speak to him, and is disposed to speak in the style here prescribed, humbly and repentingly.

*I have borne chastisement.*] The speaking this unto God under affliction signifies, that our affliction is from his hand; and to the acknowledgment of this truth, the very natural consciences of men do incline them. Though trouble be the general lot of mankind, yet it doth not come on him by an improvidential fatality: though *man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward,* yet it *comes not out of the dust.* Job v. 6, 7. It is no less true, and in itself no less clear, that all the good we enjoy, and all the evil we suffer, come from the same Hand; but we are naturally more sensible of evil than of good, and therefore do more readily reflect upon the original and causes of it. Our distresses lead us to the notice of the righteous God inflicting them, and of our own unrighteous ways procuring them, and provoking him so to do; and therefore *it is meet* to speak in this submissive, humble language to him. It is by all means necessary to *speak* to him. He is the party we have to deal withal, or to speak to, even in those afflictions whereof men are the intervenient visible causes. They are, indeed, but instrumental causes, the *rod and staff* in his hand who smites us; therefore our business is with *him,* in whose Supreme Hand alone the mitigations and increases, the continuance and the ending, of our troubles lie. *Who gave Jacob to the spoil, and Israel to the robbers? Did not the Lord, against whom we have sinned?* Isa. xlii. 24. So, Lam. i. 14, *The yoke of my transgressions is bound on by his hand.* Therefore, it is altogether necessary in all afflictions to *speak to him.* And as it is necessary to speak to him, so *it is meet* to speak *thus* to him, *I have borne chastisement, I will no more offend.* These words have in them the true composition of real repentance, humble submission and holy resolution. *I have borne chastisement*—that is, I have justly borne it, and do heartily submit to it; I bear it justly, and take it well; Lord, I acquit thee, and accuse myself. This language becomes the most innocent persons in the world in their suffering. Job knew it well, and did often acknowledge it in his preceding speeches. Though sometimes, in the heat of dispute, and in opposition to the uncharitable and unjust imputations of his friends, he seems to overstrain the assertion of his own

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integrity (which Elihu here corrects), you know he cries out, *I have sinned against thee: what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men?* Job vii. 20. And chap. ix. 30, *If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.*

Vain, foolish persons fret and foam at the miscarriage of a cause they apprehend to be righteous; but this is a great vanity and inconsiderate temerity in not observing the great and apparent unrighteousness in the persons managing it. But though both the cause and the persons were just to the greatest height imaginable among men, yet still were it meet to speak thus unto God in the lowest acknowledgments and confessions, that *righteousness belongs unto him, and unto us shame and confusion of face.* So says the Church, Lam. iii. *The Lord is righteous, for I have rebelled against his commandments.* Though affliction is not always designedly intended as the chastisement of some particular sin, yet, where sin is (and that is the case of all the sons of Adam), affliction coming in, may safely be considered in its natural cognation and alliance with sin, and so press forth humble confessions of sin, and resolutions against it. And thus in Lev. xxvi. 41, *They shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity;* shall take it humbly and penitently, and kiss the rod.

Oh, that there were such a heart in us!—that, instead of empty words, that scatter themselves in the wind, our many vain discourses we hold one with another, concerning our past and present sufferings, and further fears, and disputing of many fruitless and endless questions, we were more abundantly turning our speech this way, in unto God, and saying, We desire to give thee glory, and to take shame to ourselves, and to bear our chastisement, and to offend no more; to return each from his evil way; and to gain this by the furnace, the purging away of our dross—our many great iniquities—our oaths and cursings, and lying—our deceit, and oppressions, and pride, and covetousness—our base love of ourselves and hating one another—that we may be delivered from the tyranny of our own lusts and passions; and, in other things, *let the Lord do with us as seems good in his eyes.* Oh, that we were speaking to God in Ephraim's words, Jer. xxxi. 18, 19, 20: *Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised: Turn thou me, and I shall be turned,* &c.: words not unlike these would stir his bowels, as there: as it is said, that one string perfectly tuned to another, being touched, the other stirs of itself. When a stubborn child leaves struggling under the rod, and turns to entreating, the father then leaves off striking; nothing overcomes him but that. When a man says unto God, "Father, I have provoked thee to this; but pardon, and through thy grace I will do so no more; then the rod is thrown aside, and the *Father of mercies* and his humbled child fall to mutual tenderness and embraces.

*What I see not, teach thou me.*] The great article of conversion is, the disengagement of the heart from the love of sin. In that posture, as it actually forsakes whatsoever it perceives to be amiss, so it stands in an absolute readiness to return to every duty that yet lies hidden, upon the first discovery. That is here the genuine voice of a repentant sinner, *What I see not, teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.*

This is a very necessary supplication, even for the most discerning and clearest-sighted penitent, both in reference to the commandment and rule for discovering the general nature and several kinds of sin, and withal for the application of this general light to the examination of a man's own heart and ways, that so he may have a more exact and particular account of his own sins.

The former part of the petition is for the knowledge of the law of God, as the rule by which a man is to try and to judge himself. The most knowing are not above the need of this request; yea, I am persuaded, the most knowing know best how much they need it, and are most humbled in themselves in the conscience of their ignorance and darkness in divine things, and are most earnest and pressing in this daily supplication for increases of light and spiritual knowledge from him who is the fountain of it: *What I see not, teach thou me.* On the other side, the least knowing are often the most confident that they know all, and swelled with a conceited sufficiency of their model and determination of all things, both dogmatical and practical; and therefore are they the most imperious and magisterial in their conclusions, and the most impatient of contradiction, or even of the most modest dissent.

The wisest and holiest persons speak always in the humblest and most depressing style of their own knowledge, and that not with an affectation of modesty, but under a real sense of the thing as it is, and the sincere account they give of it, and that commonly when they are declaring themselves most solemnly, as in the sight of God, or speaking in supplication to him with whom they dare least of all dissemble. Whosoever he was that spake those *words*, in the thirtieth chapter of Proverbs, surely he was a man of eminent wisdom and piety, and yet he begins thus: *Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man; I have neither learned wisdom, nor have I the knowledge of the Holy.* And though he was so diligent a student, and so great a proficient in the law of God, yet, how importunate a petitioner is he for the understanding of it, as if he knew nothing at all! Besides the like expressions in other psalms, in that one psalm [the cxix.], which, although of such length, hath nothing but the

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breathing forth of his affection to the word and law of God, how often doth David in it reiterate that petition, *Teach me thy statutes!* —so often, that a carnal mind is tempted to grow weary of it, as a nauseating tautology; but he made it still new with the freshness and vehemency of his affection: *Make me to understand the way of thy precepts—Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law*—and *open thou mine eyes, that I may see the wonders of thy law*—unseal mine eyes, as if they were still veiled and dark. These are the earnest and nobly ambitious desires that daily solicit holy hearts, and stir them up to solicit the Teacher of hearts to be admitted more into the secrets and recesses of divine knowledge; not to those abysses that God intends should be secret still, and from which he hath barred out our curiosity, as the forbidden tree of knowledge, those secrets that belong to himself alone, and concern us not to inquire after. And certainly, to be wading in those deeps, is the way to be drowned in them. *The searcher of majesty shall be oppressed with glory.* Yet there is in man a perverse, preposterous desire to pore upon such things as are on purpose hidden that we should not inquire after them, and to seek after useless, empty speculations of them, which is a luxury and intemperance of the understanding, like unto that, and springing from that, which at first undid us in the root. These are times full of those empty, airy questions, and notions in which there is no clearness nor certainty to be attained, and if it were, yet it would serve to little or no purpose, not making the man who thinks he hath found them out, one jot the better or holier man than he was before. *What avails it,* says a devout author, *to dispute and discourse high concerning the Trinity, and want humility, and so displease that Trinity?* The light and knowledge suited according to the intendment of this copy, is of nature, such as purifies the heart and rectifies the life. *What I see not, teach thou me;* that is, of such things as may serve this end, that *if I have done iniquity, I may do it no more.* This is sound and solid knowledge, such a light as inflames the heart with the love of God and of the beauties of holiness, and still, as it grows, makes those to grow likewise. Such are still, we see, David's multiplied supplications in that cxix. Psalm: not to know reserved and useless things, but, *Hide not thy commandments from me. Thy hands have made me and fashioned me:* now, what is it that thy creature and workmanship begs of thee? What is that which will complete my being and make me do honor to my Maker? This is it—*Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.*

You that would be successful supplicants in this request, wean your hearts from that vanity of desire: such knowledge as is the cypress-tree, fair and tall, but fruitless and sapless. Apply all you know, to the purging out of sin, and intend all the further knowledge you desire, to that same end. Seek to be acquainted with higher rules of mortification, and self-denial, and charity, than as yet you have either practised, or possibly so much as thought on; that by these, your affections and actions may be advanced to greater degrees of purity, and conformity with the holiness of God. And for this end, beg of him to teach you what you see not in the exactness of the law and rule; and withal (which is the other thing in this word), that, what you see not in the application of it and search of yourself, he would likewise show you; for in that, we are commonly as undiscerning and dimsighted as in the other. Even where men have some notion of the rule and their duty, yet they perceive not their own, even their gross recessions and declinings from it. Love is a blinding thing, and above all love, self-love; and every man is naturally his own flatterer: he deals not faithfully and sincerely with himself in the search of his own evils. Now this we are to entreat of God, to be led into ourselves, and to be applied to the work of self-searching, by his own hand; not only to have a right apprehension of the law given us, but a true sight of ourselves. Oh! how many hidden, undiscerned, yea, unsuspected impurities and follies are there in the hearts of those who are the most diligent in this inquiry, much more in the greater part, even of such as can not absolutely be denied the name of good men! Some honest intentions and good desires there are in them; but they are slothful and unwilling to go into this painful business of trying and judging themselves, and when they set to it, many secret corners, and, in those, many latent corruptions do escape their search. *Cleanse me from secret faults,* says David; that is, not only from those hidden from men, but even from myself, as is clearly his meaning, by the words preceding. *Who knows the errors of his life?* Therefore is it necessary that we desire light of God. *The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord,* says Solomon, *searching the innermost parts of the belly;* but it is a candle unlighted, when he does not illuminate it for that search. Oh! what a deal of vanity and love of this world, envy and secret pride, lurks in many of our hearts, which we do not at all perceive, till God causeth us to see it, leading us in, as he did the prophet Ezekiel in the vision, to see the idolatry of the Jews in his very temple, by which they had provoked him to forsake it, and go far from his sanctuary; and having discovered one parcel, leads him in farther, and makes him enter through the wall, and adds often, *Son of man hast thou seen these? I will cause thee to see yet more abominations, and yet more abominations.* Thus it is within many of us who should be his temples, but we have a multitude of images of jealousy, one lying hid behind another, till he thus discovers them to us. Oh, what need have w



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to entreat him thus, *What I see not, teach thou me!*

Now, in both these, both in the knowledge of our rule and of ourselves, though there may be some useful subserviency of the ministry of men, yet, the great Teacher of the true knowledge of his law, and of himself, and of ourselves, is God. Men may speak to the ear, but his chair is in heaven who teaches hearts: *cathedram habet in cœlo.* Matchless Teacher! who teacheth more in one hour than men can do in a whole age, who can cure the invincible unteachableness of the dullest heart, *give understanding to the simple, and open the eyes of the blind!* So then, would we be made wise, wise for eternity, learned in real, living divinity, let us sit down at his feet, and make this our continual request, *What I see not, teach thou me?*

*If I have done iniquity.*] That is, any iniquity that I yet know not of, any hidden sin, let me but once see it, and, I hope, thou shalt see it no more within me; not willingly lodged and entertained. This speaks an entire, total giving up of all sin, and is a proclaiming of utter defiance and enmity against it; casting out what is already found out, without delay, and resolving that still in further search, as it shall be more discovered, it shall be forthwith dislodged, without a thought of sparing or partial indulgence to anything that is sin, or that is like it, or that may any way befriend it, or be an occasion and incentive of it. This is that absolute renouncing of sin, and surrender of the whole soul and our whole selves to God, which whosoever do not heartily consent to and resolve on, their religion is in vain, and (which is here the point) their affliction is in vain: whatsoever they have suffered, they have gained nothing by all their sufferings, if their hearts remain still self-willed, stubborn, untamed, and unpliable, to God. And this makes their miseries out of measure miserable, and their sins out of measure sinful: whereas, were it thus qualified, and had it any operation this way toward the subjecting of their hearts unto God, affliction were not to be called misery, but would go under the title of a blessedness: *Blessed is the man whom thou correctest and teachest him out of thy law.* That is suiting with this here desired, *I have borne chastisement; what I see not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do it no more.* Oh! were it thus with us, my brethren, how might we rejoice, and insert into our praises all that is come upon us, if it had wrought or advanced any thing of this kind within us, this blessed compliance with the will of God: not entertaining anything knowingly that displeases him; finding a pleasure in the denial and destruction of our own most beloved pleasures at his appointment and for his sake. Whatsoever is in us, and dearest to us, that would offend us, that would draw us to offend him, *were it the right hand, let it be cut off; or the right eye, let it be plucked out:* or, to make shorter work, let the whole man die at once, crucified with Jesus, *that we may be henceforth dead to sin, dead to the world, dead to ourselves, and alive only to God.*

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## SERMON III.

### THE DIVINE GLORY OF SION.

THERE is no exercise so delightful to those that are truly godly, as the solemn worship of God, if they find his powerful and sensible presence in it; and indeed there is nothing on earth more like to heaven than that is. But when he withdraws himself, and withholds the influence and breathings of his spirit in his service, then good souls find nothing more lifeless and uncomfortable. But there is this difference, even at such a time, between them and those that have no spiritual life in them at all, that they find, and are sensible of this difference; whereas the others know not what it means. And for the most part, the greatest number of those that meet together with a profession to worship God, yet are such as do not understand this difference. Custom and formality draw many to the ordinary places of public worship, and fill too much of the room; and sometimes novelty and curiosity, drawing to places not ordinary have a large share: but how few are there that come on purpose to meet with God in his worship, and to find his power in strengthening their weak faith, and weakening their strong corruptions, affording them provision of spiritual strength and comfort against times of trial, and, in a word, advancing them some steps forward in their journey toward heaven, where happiness and perfection dwell! Certainly, these sweet effects are to be found in these ordinances, if we would look after them. Let it grieve us then, that we have so often lost our labor in the worship of God through our own neglect, and entreat the Lord, that at this time he would not send us away empty. For how weak soever the means be, if he put forth his strength, the work shall be done, in some measure, to his glory and our edification. Now that he may be pleased to do so, to leave a blessing behind him, let us pray, &c.

ISAIAH XXVIII. 5, 6.

In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty unto the residue of his people.

And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate.

ALL the works of Divine Providence are full of wisdom and justice, even every one severally considered; yet we observe them best to be such, when we take notice of their order and mutual aspect one to another, whether in the succession of times, or such passages as are contemporary and fall in to-

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gether at one and the same time. As, when the Lord brings notable judgments upon the proud workers of iniquity, and at the same time confers special mercies on his own people, who is there that may not perceive justice and mercy illustrating and beautifying one another? It is true, the full reward and perfect rest of the godly is not here below; they would be sorry if it were: nor is this the place of plenary punishment for the ungodly; men may look for a judgment too. Yet, the Lord is pleased at sometimes to give some resemblances and pledges, as it were, of that great and last judgment in remarkable passages of justice and mercy, at one and the same time: and such a time it is that the prophet foretells in this his sermon, which concerns the two sister kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Having denounced a heavy calamity to come upon Israel, under the name of Ephraim, he comforts those of Judah under the name of *the residue of his people*. They not being so grossly corrupted as the others were, he stays them with this promise: *In that day*, saith he, when the other shall be overwhelmed, as with a deluge, *the Lord of hosts shall be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty unto the residue of his people*.

The promise is made up of three benefits, yet the three are but one; or rather, one is all the three to them: *The Lord of hosts*, it is he that shall be their *honor, wisdom*, and *strength; he shall be a crown*, &c. But first, a word as to the circumstance of time, *In that day*.

That sovereign Lord, who at first set up the lights of heaven to distinguish times and seasons by their constant motion, and likewise by his supreme providence ruling the world, hath fixed the periods of states and kingdoms, and decreed their revolutions, their rising, ascending, and their height, with their decline and setting, hath by a special providence determined those changes and vicissitudes that befall his church. That which the psalmist speaks, in his own particular, Psalm xxxi. 15, holds of each believer, and of the church which they make up in all ages and places: *I said, Thou art my God, my times are in thy hand*. A sure and steady hand indeed, and therefore he builds his confidence upon it, ver. 13. *They took counsel against me, but I trusted in thee*. And upon this, he prays in faith, that the face of God may shine upon him, and the wicked may be ashamed.

Thus, then as many of you as are looking after a day of mercy to the church of God, pray and believe upon this ground, That the time of it is neither in the frail hands of those that favor and seek it, nor in the hands of those that oppose it, how strong and subtle soever they be, but in HIS almighty hand, who doth in heaven and earth what pleaseth him. If he have said, *Now*, and *here*, will I give a day of refreshment to my people, who have long groaned for it, a day of the purity and power of religion; if, I say, this be *his* purpose, they must have somewhat more than omnipotence, who can hinder it. When his appointed time comes, to make a day of deliverance dawn upon his church, after their long night either of affliction or of defection, or both; they who contrive against that day-spring, are as vain as if they would sit down to plot how to hinder the sun from rising in the morning. And they who let go their hopes of it, because of great apparent difficulties that interpose between their eye and the accomplishment of that work, are as weak as if they should imagine, when mists and thick vapors appear about the horizon in the morning, that these could hinder the rising of the sun, which is so far out of their reach, and *comes forth as a bridegroom, and rejoices as a mighty man to run his race*, says David. Those mists may indeed hinder his clear appearance, and keep it from the eye for a time; but reason tells us, even then, that they can not stop his course. And faith assures us no less in the other case, that no difficulties can hold back God's day and work of mercy to his people. But you will say, All the difficulty is, to know whether the appointed time be near or not. It is true, we have no particular prophecies to assure us; but certainly, when God *awakes* his children and makes them *rise*, this is a probable sign that it is near day. I mean, when he stirs them up to more than usual hopes, and prayers, and endeavors, it is very likely that he intends them some special good. But yet more, when he himself is *arisen* (as it pleaseth him to speak), that is, when he is begun to appear, in a more than ordinary manner of working by singular and wonderful footsteps of providence, this is, no doubt, a sign that he will go on to show remarkable mercy to *Sion*, and that *the time to favor her, yea, the set time is come*. Ps. cii. 13.

Howsoever then, let the wonderful workings of the Lord move those of you that have any power and opportunity, to be now (if ever) active for the greatest good both of the present age and of posterity. And you that can be no other way useful, yet you shall be no small helpers if you be much in prayer; let both your hopes and your fears serve to sharpen your prayers. Be not too much dejected with any discouragement, neither be ye carnally lifted up with outward appearances; for *the heart of him that is lifted up, is not upright in him*, Hab. ii. 4; but *live*, as *the just* do, *by* your *faith*. And if the deferring of your hopes should *sicken your hearts*, as Solomon speaks, yet, stay and comfort them with the cordial of the promises. This you are sure of, you have God's own word engaged for it, that in those latter days Babylon shall be brought to the dust, and the true church of Christ shall flourish and increase. And this *vision is for an appointed time* (as Habakkuk says of his); *at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not tarry*.

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*In that day.*] That is, in the day of Ephraim's or Israel's calamity denounced in the former verses; which, as most do conceive, was when the Assyrian oppressed them, and in the end led them captive, in the reign of Hosea, as you have the history of it, 2 Kings xvii., at which time Hezekiah was king of Judah, as you find in the following chapter: and in *that notable reformation* wrought by him, with those blessings that followed upon it, is found the accomplishment of this promise to Judah, *In that day*, &c. The parallel of God's different dealing with these two kingdoms at the time there specified (*in that day*), does afford divers lessons, which might be here not impertinently taken notice of. Only this:

Though Judah also had its own corruptions when Hezekiah came to the crown, yet it pleased the Lord to spare them and work a peaceable reformation, making Israel's punishment their warning. Truly, that nation with whom the Lord deals thus graciously, is vilely ungrateful if they observe it not with much humility and thankfulness, and with profit too. If the Lord should answer your desires and hopes with a reformation in a peaceable way, and should yet lengthen out your long-continued peace, and should make this little past shaking of it cause it to take root the faster; if he should, I say, do this, where would ye find fit praises for such a wonder of mercy? especially considering, that in the meanwhile he hath made other reformed churches fields of blood, and made, as it were, the sound of their stripes preach repentance to us. But certainly, if the hearing the voice of the rod prevail not, we shall feel the smart of it, as this people of Judah did afterward, because they were not so wise as to become wiser and better by Israel's folly and calamity. We are expecting great things at our Lord's hands, and our provocations and sins against him are great; yet there is no one of them all puts us in so much danger of disappointment, as impenitence. Were there more repentance and personal reformation among us, we might take it as a hopeful forerunner of that public reformation which so many seem now to desire.

*The Lord of hosts.*] This style of his, you know, is frequent in the prophets, in their predictions of mercy and judgment; intimating both his greatness and majesty, and his supreme power for accomplishing his word. No created power can resist him; yea, all must serve him. The most excellent creatures can have no greater honor: the greatest are not exempted, nor the meanest excluded from serving him. In Acts xii. 23, you find one of the noblest creatures, and a number of the vilest, made use of at the same time in the same service. Because Herod did accept of the sacrilege of the people, and gave not back to this Lord of hosts his own glory, *the angel of the Lord smote him*, and *he vermin devoured him.* And in Egypt, you know the employing of the destroying angel, and what variety of hosts this Lord of hosts did employ to plague them. What madness, then, is it to oppose and encounter this great General!—even in doubtful cases, to run on blindly, without examining, lest peradventure a man should be found a fighter against God. And on the other side, it is great weakness to admit any fear under his banner. If a man could say, when he was told of the multitude of the ships the enemy had, *Against how many do ye reckon me?* how much more justly may we reckon this Lord of hosts, against multitudes of enemies, how great soever! *They are to him as the drop of a bucket, and the smallest dust of the balance.* It is ignorance and mean thoughts of this mighty Lord, that make his enemies so confident; and it is the same evil, in some degree, or, at the best, forgetfulness of his power, that causeth diffidence in his followers. *I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and forgettest the Lord, thy Maker.* Isa. li. 12, 13. Now this same Lord of hosts, you know, is likewise called *the God of peace:* he is indeed, *et pace et bello insignis, splendid both in peace and war.* The blessing of peace, and the success of war, are both from him; and to him alone is due the praise of both.

*Shall be for a crown of glory.*] He shall dignify and adorn them by his special presence: to wit, in the purity of his ordinances and religion among them; the profession and flourishing of that, shall be their special glory and beauty. For, as the other two benefits concern their civil good, *justice* flourishing within, and wealth and opulency from without, so, doubtless, this first, this *glory* and *beauty*, is religion, as the chiefest of the three, and the other two are its attendants. In Ps. xxvi. 8, the sanctuary, the place of their solemn worship, is called *the place where God's honor dwelleth*, or the tabernacle of his honor, and, Psalm xcvi. 9, *the glorious sanctuary*, or *the beauty of holiness.* And the ark of God, you know, was called *the glory. The glory is departed from Israel* (said the wife of Phineas), *for the ark of God is taken.* 1 Samuel iv. 21. Pure religion and a pure worship is the glory of God among his people, and, consequently, *their glory.* Now, referring this prophecy to Hezekiah's time, the accomplishment of it is evident, in that work of reformation whereof you have the full history, 2 Chron. xxix. 30, &c.

If it be thus, that the purity of religion and worship is *the crown and glory* of a people; and therefore, on the other side, that their deepest stain of dishonor and vileness is the vitiating of religion with human devices; then, to contend for the preservation or the reformation of it, is noble and worthy of a Christian. It is for the crown of Jesus Christ, which is likewise a *crown of glory*, and a *diadem of beauty to them*, he being their head.

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It is, indeed, the true glory both of kings and their kingdoms. Labor, then, for constancy in this work: let no man take your crown from you. You know how busy the emissaries of the church of Rome have been to take it from us, or, at least, to pick the diamonds out of it, and put in false, counterfeit ones in their places. I mean, they stole away the power of religion, and filled up the room with shadows and fopperies of their own devising. It is the vanity of that church to think they adorn the worship of God when they dress it up with splendor in her service, which, though some magnify it so much, yet may most truly be called a glistering slavery and captivity. Then is she truly free, and wears her *crown*, when the ordinances of God are conformable to his own appointment. It is vanity in man, I say, when they dress it up with a multitude of gaudy ceremonies, and make *it* the smallest part of *itself;* whereas, indeed, its true glory consists not in pomp, but in purity and simplicity. In the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse, we find the church, under the name of a woman, richly attired, indeed, but her ornaments be all heavenly; *the sun* her clothing, and her crown *of twelve stars*. Needs she, then, borrow sublunary glory? No, she treads upon it: *the moon* is *under her feet*. There is another woman, indeed, in that same book, *arrayed in purple and scarlet, decked with gold and precious stones*, and *having a golden cup in her hand*, but that golden cup is *full of abominations and filthiness*, and she herself the *mother of abominations*. Apoc. xvii. 4. The natural man judges according to his reach; but to a spiritual eye there is a most genuine beauty in the service of God, and the government of his house; and when they are nearest to the rule, the word of God, then it is that the Lord himself is *the crown and diadem* of his church.

*A crown of glory.*] Again: we may consider this personally, as belonging in particular to every believer. They are all *made kings and priests unto God the Father*. Apoc. i. 6. They are *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood*, 1 Peter ii. 9, how despicable soever to the world. This is their dignity: *the Lord is their crown and diadem*. He subdues their lusts, and makes them kings over their own affections, and more than conquerors over all troubles and persecutions; whereas carnal men are continually hurried, like slaves, unto base employments, still kept toiling in the ignoble service of their own lusts. They think, indeed, it is their liberty; but that is a baseness of spirit that complies so well with so vile and servile a condition. And whereas they judge the godly to be the refuse and dross of the earth, and the proper objects of contempt, this is because this their crown, though most glorious, is invisible to the eye of nature. *The Lord is a crown*. If they knew what this is, they would see enough in it to countervail their outward meanness and the reproaches the world cast on them: as the Apostle St. Peter hath it, 1 Peter iv. 14, *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you*. He is their *crown*.

And observe, how this crown is opposed to that blasted glory and fading *crown of pride*, spoken of in the former verses. *Wo to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower*.

Who is there that sees not, in daily experience, the vanity and inconstancy of worldly glory, and yet how few are there that wean themselves from it, and learn to disdain it! Still men dote upon that which is not, upon a shadow, a nothing. But would you have a glory that fadeth not, a garland that can not wither, make the Lord your *crown* and your *glory;* and if he be so, glory in him, and in nothing else. *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth* ME. Jer. ix. 23, 24.

You that are noble, aspire to this *crown*, as being so far above your perishing honors and bounded powers. And you that are outwardly meaner and lower, see how little cause you have to complain of your condition, seeing you are not debarred from this best and greatest honor. And, that you may discern aright what it is, know that it consists in the renovation of God's image within you, which is in holiness and righteousness: so the Lord becomes your *crown* in the kingdom of grace. And by this you may discover whether or no you have attained it: if you can yet delight to wallow in the puddle and pleasures of sin, you are far from this royal condition; but if you find your soul possessed with the love of holiness, and that you are trampling upon profane delights, this may persuade you that God hath enabled you, and crowned you with his grace, and will crown you with his glory. Again, try it by this; if the Lord is become your crown and your glory, you will glory in him, and in nothing else. Though you be wise, you will not glory in your wisdom, nor in strength, nor in riches, nor in honors, though you had them all; but if you glory, you will glory in the Lord. And withal, your highest joy will be to see the advancement of his glory, and, if you can, to be any way serviceable to the advancing of it.

*And for a spirit of judgment.*] Both to those that *sit in judgment*, and to the people. For justice is the strongest base and establishment of authority. And withal, the influence of it is most sweet and comfortable to those who are under authority; and where it is wanting, that order and relation of superiors and inferiors, which God hath appointed in the societies of men for their good, tends exceedingly to the damage of both. And therefore, where God intendeth to continue the peace and welfare of a people, he is liberal in pouring out much of this *spirit of judgment*

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on those who *sit in judgment*. On the contrary, it is for a heavy punishment, when he withdraws his Spirit from rulers, and leaves them wholly to the corruption and vanity of their own spirits.

*To him that sitteth in judgment.* That is, to all that are in places of authority and judicature, from the supreme to the lowest magistrate; for this concerns them all. For they be all raised in their subordination, and several places above the people, for the benefit and good of the people; as the stars, that be set so high, yet are placed there to be useful and beneficial to the inferior world.

Now this spirit of judgment comprehends in it both due *wisdom* and *prudence*, for the trial and right judging of affairs, and for the discerning between sound and perverse counsel: and, withal, a *judgment practically good*, that can not be biased from the straight line of equity and justice by any sinister respect.

Now, seeing the *spirit of judgment* is from the Lord, yea, he is this spirit, it ought to persuade those that *sit in judgment*, to entreat and pray for this, and to depend upon it, and beware of self-confidence. *Trust in the Lord*, saith Solomon, *and lean not to thine own understanding:* for if you do, it will prove but a broken reed. And as they that sit in judgment should entreat his Spirit by prayer, so, generally, all must share with them in this duty, and make supplication for all that are in authority over them, especially in extraordinary times. Truly we have matter of thankfulness, that the Lord hath in some measure inclined the royal heart of our sovereign to the desires of his people; and we ought still to pray that the Lord would *give the king his judgments;* and then, as the psalmist adds, *The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.* Psalm lxii. 3. And, for this end, let all who wish the public, yea, their own good, pray for abundance of this *spirit of judgment* to be conferred on them. Your eyes and expectations are upon them. If you would enjoy the lamp, you must pour in oil. This spirit, indeed, you can not pour upon them, but if you pour out many prayers, you may draw it from above: he will give it, who here promises to be *a spirit of judgment.*

*And for strength.* Observe, the way to be powerful and successful against foreign enemies, is, to have religion and justice flourishing at home. And truly, if it please our God to answer the desires of his people at this time, it may so unite the affection and strength of the two kingdoms (*the Lord of hosts* being their *strength*), as to make them a terror to their enemies; whereas they were become a scorn and derision to them. For your particular, labor to make the Lord your glory, to have Christ made unto you, as the apostle speaks, *both wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification,* which are the glory and beauty of the soul, *and redemption* from spiritual enemies. Draw strength from him to fight and prevail against them, till, after the short combat of this life, you obtain the crown, and dwell in his presence, where you shall fear no more assaults, neither of sin nor of affliction, but shall be for ever happy in the blessed vision of his face. *To him be glory.* Amen.

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## SERMON IV.

### CHRIST THE LIGHT AND LUSTRE OF THE CHURCH.

EXTERNAL worship doth openly acknowledge a Deity, but want of inward sense in worship secretly denieth it: *the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.* It is strange to hear so much noise of religion in the world, and to find so little piety. To present the living God with a carcass of lifeless worship, is to pay him with shells of services, and so to mock him. And it is a more admirable long-suffering in him to defer the punishment of such devotion, than of all the other sins in the world. The Egyptian temples were rich and stately fabrics: a stranger who had looked upon them without, would have imagined some great deity within; but if they entered (as Lucian says, laughing at them), nothing was to be seen, but only some ape, or cat, or pied bull, or some other fine god like those. To behold our fair semblance of religion who frequent this house, it would appear that we were all the temples of the Holy Ghost; but whoso could look within us, would find in many of our hearts, lust, pride, avarice, or some such like secret vice adored as a god. And these are they which, while our bodies sit here, do alienate our souls from the service of the Eternal God, so that we are either altogether senseless and dead before him, or, if any fit of spiritual motion rise within us, we find it here, and here we leave it, as if it were sacrilege to take it home with us. But did once that Spirit of grace breathe savingly upon our souls, we should straight renounce and abhor those base idols, and then all the current of our affection would run more in this channel: our services would then be spiritual, and it would be our heaven upon earth, to view God in his sanctuary. And the obtaining of the change, is, or should be, the main end of this our meeting; and, that it may be the happy effect of it, our recourse must be to the throne of grace by humble prayer, in the name of our Mediator, *Jesus Christ, the righteous.*

ISAIAH lx. 1.

Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

ADMIRABLE is the worth and depth of Divine providence! This, either we know not, or at least seldom remember. While we for-

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get the wonders of providence, we direct our thoughts to baser objects, and think not on it; and while we forget the depth of providence (if at any time we look toward it), we judge rashly and think amiss of it. If this be true of that general providence whereby God rules the world, it is more true of his special providence toward his church. This is both the most excellent piece of it, and therefore best worth the reading, and also the hardest piece, and therefore it requires sobriety in judging: above all other things, he that suddenly judges in this, makes haste to err. To have a right view of it, it must be taken altogether, and not by parcels. Pieces of rarest artifice, while they are a making, seem little worth, especially to an unskilful eye, which, being completed, command admiration. Peter Martyr says well, *De operibus Dei, antequam actum, non est judicandam: There is no judging of the works of God, before they are finished.* There is a time when the daughters of Sion *embrace the dunghill* and *sit desolate in the streets*, as Jeremiah hath it in his Lamentations (iv. 5), and at that same time the voice of Babylon is, *I sit as a queen and shall see no sorrow.* Apoc. xviii. 7; Isa. xlvii. 7. All is out of order here. But if we stay awhile, we shall see Sion and Babylon appointed to change seats, by the great Master of the world: *Come down*, says he, *Daughter of Babylon, and sit in the dust.* Isa. xlvii. 1. And here, to Sion, *Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.* It is an entire catastrophe: both parties find a notable alteration together. That same hand that exalts the one, ruins the other. When the sun rises upon the church, her antipodes must needs be covered with darkness: as we find it in the next verse to the text: *Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.*

The prophet, elevated by the Spirit of God to a view of after ages as clear as if they were present, seems here to find his people sitting under the dark mantle of a sad and tedious night, and having long expected the sun's return in vain, before its time, they give over expectation when it is near them, and desperately fold themselves to lie perpetually in the dark. Now the prophet, standing as it were, awake upon some mountain, perceives the day approaching, and the golden chariots of the morning of deliverance hasting forward, and seems to come speedily with this glad news to a captive people, and sounds this trumpet in their ears, *Arise, shine, for thy light is come.* The very manner of expression is sudden and rousing, without a copulative; not, *arise and shine*, but, *Arise, shine*, &c.

The words have in them a clear stamp of relation to a low posture and obscure condition: they suppose a people lying or sitting without light. Deep distress is that dark foil that best sets off the lustre of marvellous deliverances; and among many other reasons of the church's vicissitudes, why may not this be one? The Lord is more illustrious in the world by that deep wisdom and great power that shines when he raises and restores her from desperate afflictions, than if he had still preserved her in constant ease. He seems sometimes careless of her condition, and regardless of her groans; but even then, is he *waiting the most fit time to be gracious*, as our prophet speaks. And when it is time, out of the basest estate he brings her forth more fresh, strong, and beautiful, than before. *Though you have lain among the pots, yet ye shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.* Psalm lxviii. 13. Do with the church what you will, she shall come through, and that with advantage. *Mergas profundo, pulchrior exilit*, as one says of Rome. Keep the church seventy years captive, yet, after that, she shall arise and shine more glorious than ever.

But surely, the strain of this evangelic prophecy rises higher than any temporal deliverance. Therefore we must rise to some more spiritual sense of it, not excluding the former. And that which some call divers senses of the same scripture, is, indeed, but divers parts of one full sense. This prophecy is, out of question, a most rich description of the kingdom of Christ under the gospel. And in this sense, this invitation to *arise* and *shine* is mainly addressed to the mystical Jerusalem, yet not without some privilege to the literal Jerusalem beyond other people. They are first invited to *arise* and *shine*, because the sun arose first in their horizon. Christ came first of the Jews, and came first *to* them. *The Redeemer shall come to Zion*, says our prophet, in the former chapter. But miserable Jerusalem *knew not the day of her visitation, nor the things that concerned her peace, and therefore are they now hid from her eyes.* She delighted to deceive herself with fancies of I know not what imaginary grandeur and outward glory, to which the promised Messiah should exalt her, and did, in that kind particularly, abuse this very prophecy; so doting upon a sense grossly literal, she forfeited the enjoyment of those spiritual blessings that are here described. But undoubtedly, that people of the Jews shall once more be commanded to *arise and shine*, and their return shall be the riches of the Gentiles; and that shall be a more glorious time than ever the church of God did yet behold. Nor is there any inconvenience, if we think that the high expressions of this prophecy have some spiritual reference to that time, since the great doctor of the Gentiles applies some words of the former chapter to that purpose, Rom. xi. 29. They forget a main point of the church's glory, who pray not daily for the conversion of the Jews.

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But to pass that, and insist on the spiritual sense of these words, as directed to the whole church of Christ, they contain a powerful excitement to a twofold act, enforced (as I conceive), by one reason under a twofold expression, neither of them superfluous, but each giving light to the other, and suiting very aptly with the two words of command: *Arise, for the glory of the Lord is risen, and shine, for thy light is come.*

I will not now subdivide these parts again, and cut them smaller, but will rather unite them again into this one proposition: *The coming and presence of Christ engages all to whom he comes, to arise and shine.* In this proposition may be considered, the nature of the duties, the universality of the subject, and the force of the reason.

I. The nature of the duties—what it is to *arise and shine.* Arising hath reference either to a fall, or to some contrary posture of sitting or lying, or to one of those two conditions which are so like one another, sleep, or death; and to all these, spiritually understood, may it here be referred. This is the voice of the gospel to the sons of Adam, *arise;* for in him they all *fell.* The first sin of that first man was the great fall of mankind: it could not but undo us, it was from so high a station. Our daily sins are our daily falls, and they are the fruits of that great one. *Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity,* says the Lord to his people, Hos. xiv. 1. As for those postures of sitting and lying, the Scripture makes use of them both to signify the state of sin. Says not St. John, *The world lies in wickedness?* 1 John v. 19. Are not the people said to *sit in darkness,* mentioned Matt. iv. 16? Which is directly opposite to *arise and shine.* In the darkness of Egypt, it is said, the people *sat still;* none arose from their places. In the gross mist of corrupt nature, man can not bestir himself to any spiritual action; but when this light is come, then he may, and should arise.

Now for sleep and death, sin is most frequently represented in holy writ under their black vizors. To forbear citing places where they are severally so used, we shall find them jointly in one, Ephes. v. 14: *Arise, thou that sleepest, and stand up from the dead;* which place seems to have special allusion to this very text.

The impenitent sinner is as one buried in sleep: his soul is in darkness, fit for sleep, and loves to be so. That he may sleep the sounder, he shuts all the passages of light, as enemies to his rest, and so, by close windows and curtains, makes an artificial night to himself within: not a beam appears there, though without the clear day of the gospel shines round about him. The senses of his soul, as we may call them, are all bound up, and are not *exercised to discern good and evil,* as the apostle speaks, Heb. v. 14. And his leading faculty, his understanding, is surcharged with sleepy vapors, that arise incessantly from the inferior part of his soul, his perverse affections. Nor hath his mind any other exercise, in his sleepy condition, than the vain business of dreaming. His most refined and wisest thoughts are but mere extravagancies from man's due end, and his greatest contentments nothing but golden dreams. Yet he is serious in them, and no wonder; for who can discern the folly of his own dream till he is awake? He that dreams he eateth, when he awakes, finds *his soul empty,* and not till then. Isa. xxix. 8. Now, while he thus sleeps, his great business lies by; yet spends he his hand-breadth of time as fast, while he is fast asleep, as if he were in continual employment. Judge, then, if it be not needful to bid this man *arise.*

Lastly, this voice may import, that man is spiritually dead. *God* is the life of the soul, as *it* is of the body: while he dwells there, it is both comely and active; but once destitute of his presence, it becomes a carcass, where, besides privation of life and motion, there is a positive filthiness, a putrefaction in the soul, unspeakably worse than that of dead bodies. *Corruptio optimi pessima.* And as dead bodies are removed from the sight of men, dead souls are cast out from the favorable sight of God, till Christ's saying, *Arise,* revives them. The ministers of the word are appointed to cry, *Arise,* indifferently to all that hear them: and Christ hath reserved this privilege and liberty, to join his effective voice when and to whom he pleases. A carnal man may show his teeth at this; but who is he that can, by any solid reason, charge absurdity upon this way of dispensing outward and inward vocation? I will not here mention their idle cavils. The Scripture is undeniably clear in this, that man is naturally *dead in sin.* The gospel bids him *arise,* and it is Christ that is his life, and that raises him.

Thus we see, in some measure, what it is for men to *arise.* Now being risen, they must *shine,* and that two ways; *jointly and publicly,* as they make up visible churches, and likewise *personally,* in their particular conversation. First, then, what is the shining of the true church? Doth not a church, then, shine, when church service is raised from a decent and primitive simplicity, and decorated with pompous ceremonies, with rich furniture and gaudy vestments? Is not the church, then, beautiful? Yes, indeed; but all the question is, whether this be the proper, genuine beauty or not; whether this be not *strange fire,* as the fire that Aaron's sons used, which became vai , and was taken as strange fire. Methinks it can not be better decided than to refer it to St. John, in his book of the Revelations. We find there the descriptions of two several women, the *one* riding in state, arrayed in purple, decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearl, ch. xvii.; the *other,* ch. xii., in rich attire too, but of another kind, clothed with the sun, and a crown of twelve stars on her head. The other's decorament was all

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earthly, this woman's is all celestial. What need has she to borrow light and beauty from precious stones, who is *clothed with the sun*, and crowned with stars? She wears no sublunary ornaments, but, which is more noble, she treads upon them; *the moon is under her feet.* Now, if you know (as you do all, without doubt), which of these two is the spouse of Christ, you can easily resolve the question. The truth is, those things seem to deck religion, but they undo it. Observe where they are most used, and we shall find little or no substance of devotion under them; as we see in that apostate church of Rome. This painting is dishonorable for Christ's spouse, and besides, it spoils her natural complexion. The superstitious use of torches and lights in the church by day, is a kind of shining, but surely not that which is commanded here. No; it is an affront done both to the sun in the heaven, and to the Sun of Righteousness in the church.

What is meant, then, when the church is commanded to *shine*, or *be enlightened?* These two readings give the entire sense of the word; for, first, having no light of herself, she must *receive light*, and then *show it;* first, *be enlightened*, and then *shine.* She is enlightened by Christ, the Sun of righteousness, shining in the sphere of the gospel. This is that light that comes to her, and the glory of the Lord that arises upon her. Hence she receives her laws and forms of government, and her shining is, briefly, the pure exercise of those and conformity to them.

And the personal shining of the several members of a church is, a comely congruity with pure worship and discipline; and it is that which now is most needful to be urged. Every Christian soul is personally engaged first to be enlightened, and then to shine; and we must draw our light for ourselves from that same source that furnishes the church with her public light. There is a word in the civil law, *Uxor fulget radiis mariti:* The wife shines by the rays of her husband's light. Now every faithful soul is espoused to Christ, and therefore may well shine, seeing the Sun himself is their husband. He adorns them with a double beauty of *justification* and *sanctification:* by *that* they shine more especially to God, by *this* to men. And may not these two be signified by a double character given to the spouse in Cant. vi. 20? *She is fair as the moon, and clear as the sun.* The lesser light is that of sanctification, *fair as the moon;* that of justification the greater, by which *she is as clear as the sun.* The sun is perfectly luminous, but the moon is but half enlightened: so, the believer is perfectly justified, but sanctified only in part: his one half, his flesh, is dark; and as the partial illumination is the reason of so many changes in the moon, to which changes the sun is not subject at all, so the imperfection of a Christian's holiness is the cause of so many waxings and wanings, and of the great inequality in his performances, whereas in the meanwhile his justification remains constantly like itself. *This* is imputed, *that* inherent. The light of sanctification must begin in the understanding, and thence be transfused to the affections, the inferior parts of the soul, and thence break forth and shine into action. This is then the nature of the duties, *Arise and shine.*

II. The universality of the subject, which was the second head, is this, that every man that knows Christ, is here engaged to *shine* too. Neither grandeur exempts from the duty of shining, nor doth meanness exclude from the privilege of shining. Men of low condition in this world need not despair of it, for it is a spiritual act; great men need not despise it, for it is a noble act, to shine by Christ's light. In the third verse of this chapter it is said to the church, *Kings shall come to the brightness of thy rising.* To what end, but to partake of her light and shine with her? And indeed, the regal attire of Christ's righteousness, and the white robes of holiness, will exceedingly well become kings and princes. *Give the king thy judgments, O Lord, and thy righteousness to the king's son.*

III. The third and last thing propounded was the force of the reason; that *Christ's presence* engages to *arise and shine.* Wherein it is supposed that Christ, declared in the gospel, is the *light* which is said here to *come*, and the *glory of the Lord* which is said to be *risen;* so that now it should be more amply cleared, how Christ is light and the glory of the Lord, and what his coming and rising is. But of these afterward. I shall close now with a word of exhortation.

*Arise*, then, *for the glory of the Lord is risen.* The day of the gospel is too precious that any of it should be spent in sleep, or idleness, or worthless business. Worthless business detains many of us. *Arise*, immortal souls, from turmoiling in the dust, and working in the clay like Egyptian captives. Address yourselves to more noble work. There is a Redeemer come, who will pay your ransom, and rescue you from such vile service, for more excellent employment. It is strange how the souls of Christians can so much forget their first original from heaven, and their new hopes of returning thither, and the rich price of their redemption, and, forgetting all these, dwell so low, and dote so much upon trifles. How is it that they hear not their well-beloved's voice crying, *Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away?* Though the eyes of true believers are so enlightened, that they shall not sleep unto death, yet their spirits are often seized with a kind of drowsiness and slumber, and sometimes even when they should be of most activity. The time of Christ's check to his three disciples made it very sharp, though the words are mild: *What! could you not watch with me one hour?* Shake off, believing souls, that heavy humor.



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*Arise*, and satiate the eye of faith with the contemplation of Christ's beauty, and follow after him, till you attain the place of full enjoyment. And you others who never yet saw him, *arise*, and admire his matchless excellency. The things you esteem great, appear so but through ignorance of his greatness. His brightness, if you saw it, would obscure to you the greatest splendor of the world, as all those stars that go never down upon us, yet they are swallowed up in the surpassing light of the sun when it arises. *Stand up from the dead, and he shall give you light. Arise and work while it is day, for the night shall come wherein none can work*, says our Savior himself. Happy are they who rise early in the morning of their youth; for the day of life is very short, and the art of Christianity long and difficult. Is it not a grievous thing, that men never consider why they came into the world, till they be upon the point of going out again, nor think how to live, till they be summoned to die? But most of all unhappy, he who never wakens out of that pleasing dream of false happiness, till he falls into eternal misery. *Arise*, then, betimes, and prevent that sad awakening.

And being risen, *put on your beautiful garments*. Isaiah liii. 1. Draw toward you with the hand of faith the rich mantle of Christ's righteousness. *It is time to awake*, says the apostle, and presently after. *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ*. Rom. xiii. 11, 14. And it is a wonder how a sinner can rest, while he is out of this garment; for there is no other in heaven nor on earth, can make him shine to God, and so shelter him from the stroke of justice. Put him on, then, and so shine: being thus clothed, thou shalt shine in justification, and likewise in sanctity. What a privilege is it, to be like God! A sanctified conscience, what can be said against it? And first have an enlightened understanding, for that is the proper seat of light. That ignorant zeal which Rome commends, exposes religion to scorn and contempt. Heat without light, is the character of the fire of hell. I know, all are not tied to a like degree of knowledge, but certainly, all are obliged to have a competency, and diligence for increase. Aspire, then, to be intelligent Christians, and to know well what you believe. Let your minds be *filled with knowledge*, as the apostle speaks. But let it not stop there; it must have influence into the will. *Lux est vehiculum caloris:* True light conveys heat. All the knowledge that the natural man hath of Christ, not warming his affection to Christ, is but *ignis fatuus*, a vain light: it shall never lead him to happiness. Saving light produces love, and by that acts. *Faith works by love*, says the apostle. That breaks forth and shines in the life, in godliness, righteousness, and sobriety. Shine, then, in all these; first, in piety toward God, for this is the reflection of those rays of light back toward their source, and this will command the other two. No man that shines in godliness will wallow in injustice and intemperance. Guile and wrong can not endure the light: they that are unjust can not shine. And let them never offer to shine among Christians, who are not sober, but stained with riot and uncleanness. These foul enormities lay waste the conscience, and put out the light. How can any seeds of grace subsist undrowned, that are exposed to a daily deluge of cups? How can that pure Spirit that chose the likeness of a chaste dove, dwell and give light in that soul which is a nest of impure and filthy lusts? No; there can be no fellowship between this celestial light, whereby we should shine, and those infernal workings of darkness. Let profane men hold it a chief strain of wit, to scoff at purity, but you who pretend heavenward in good earnest, and mean to shine in glory, shine here in holiness; *For without holiness no man shall see God*. And do it with these qualifications: (1.) *Constantly*—in every estate. Let not this Divine light go out, neither by day in prosperity, nor by night in adversity. In every place. Do not shine clear, and be dark in your chamber: they that do thus, *have their reward*. That is a sad word, if rightly understood. Beware of hypocrisy. (2.) Shine *progressively*, gaining still more and more victory over darkness, till you attain unmixed and perfect light. *The way of the just*, says Solomon, *is like a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day*. Prov. iv. 18. (3.) Shine *humbly*, to his glory whose light you borrow; not to show forth your own excellencies, but his, *who hath called you from darkness to his marvellous light*. 1 Pet ii. 9. If we be *children of light*, our brightness must praise the *Father of lights*. *Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works* (not yourselves, if you can be hid; as the sun affords its light, and will scarce suffer us to look upon itself) *may glorify* (not you, but) *your heavenly Father*. Matt. v. 6. To conclude,

The pure light of the church is revived, and the glory of the Lord *is* risen upon you, and upon this glory there shall be a defence. If God be your glory in the midst of you, he will be likewise a wall of fire round about you. All the danger is, if we fall short in the duty of shining. But as you desire that this glory should abide and dwell among you, let all estates of men provoke one another to shine bright in holiness. You who either by birth or office are in eminent stations, know that you were set there to be eminent and exemplary in shining, as stars of more notable magnitude. You who are ministers of this light, know that *you are the light of the world;* and if the very light become darkness, how great will that darkness be! You that are of a lower order, know that you must shine too; for it is a common duty. There is a certain company of small stars in the firmament, which, though they can not be each one severally seen, yet, being many, their

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united light makes a conspicuous brightness in the heavens, which is called the *milky way:* so, though the shining of every private Christian is not so much severally remarkable, yet the concourse and meeting of their light together will make a bright path of holiness shine in the church.

Now to the end we may each one shine in our measure, we must learn to turn ourselves often toward him from whom our light is derived. Conversing with him, will make us more and more like him. There is a secret unknown virtue for this purpose in secret prayer and meditation. Were we more in the mount with God, our faces would shine more with men. Let us then rescue from the world all the time we can, to resort frequently thither, till such time as the soul, which is now often pulled down again by the flesh, shall let that mantle fall and come down no more, but shine there without spot, and be for ever satisfied with her Maker's image.

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## SERMON V.

### CHRIST THE LIGHT AND LUSTRE OF THE CHURCH.

Art imitates nature: and the nearer it comes to nature in its effects, it is the more excellent. Grace is the new nature of a Christian, and hypocrisy that art which counterfeits it; and the more exquisite it is in imitation, it is the more plausible to men, but the more abominable to God. It may frame a spiritual man in image so to the life, that not only others, but even the hypocrite himself may admire it, and favoring his own artifice, may be deceived so far, as to say, and to think, it lives, and fall in love with it; but he is no less abhorred by the Searcher of hearts, than pleasing to himself. Surely, this mischief of hypocrisy can never be enough inveighed against. When religion is in request, it is the chief malady of the church, and numbers die of it; though, because it is a subtle and inward evil, it be little perceived. It is to be feared there are many sick of it, who look well and comely in God's outward worship, and they may pass well in good weather, in times of peace, but days of adversity are days of trial. The prosperous estate of the church makes hypocrites, and her distress discovers them. But if they escape such trial, there is one inevitable day coming, wherein all secret things shall be made manifest. Men shall be turned inside out: and among all sinners that shall then be brought before that judgment-seat, the deformedest sight shall be an unmasked hypocrite, and the heaviest sentence shall be *his* portion.

Oh! that the consideration of this would scare us out of that false disguise in time, and put us all upon the study of sincerity! Precious is that grace in God's esteem: a little of it will weigh down mountains of formal religion, in the balance of the sanctuary. Which of us have not now brought hypocrisy, more or less, into the house of God? Oh, that it were not with intention to nourish it, but with desire to be here cured of it! For he alone who hates it so much, can cure it; he alone can confer upon us that sincerity wherein he mainly delights. If we have a mind, indeed, to be endued with it, it is nowhere else to be had: we must entreat it of God by humble prayer, in the name of his well-beloved Son, by the assistance of his Holy Spirit.

### Isaiah lx. 1.

Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

*Truly, light is sweet, and it is a pleasing thing to behold the sun,* says the preacher, Eccl. xi. 7. But the interchange of night with day adds to its beauty, and the longest night makes day the welcomest; as that people well know, whose situation in the world gives them a five or six months' night all of one piece. It is reported of some of them, that when they conceive their night draws toward an end, they put on their richest apparel, and climb up to the highest mountains, with emulation who shall first discover the returning light; which, so soon as it appears, they salute with acclamations of joy, and welcome it with solemn feasting, and all other testimonies of exceeding gladness. But such is the lethargy of sinful man, that he stirs not to meet his spiritual light; and, which is worse, when it comes upon him, it finds him in love with darkness. Instead of his shouts of joy for this light, many a cry must be sounded in his ears, to awaken him; and it is well, too, if at length he hear and obey this voice, *Arise, shine, for thy light is come.* It is clear that the words contain a *command*, and the *reason* of it: the *command* to a twofold act; the *reason* under two expressions, proportionately different. Good reason the church should *arise*, when the *Lord's glory is risen upon her;* and it is very congruous she should be *enlightened* and *shine*, when *her light is come.* Of those two acts, or duties, somewhat was formerly spoken; and the reason likewise was made use of so far as relative to those duties, and tending to their enforcement. But the meaning of the phrases in which the reason is expressed, was rather, at that time, supposed, than either duly proved or illustrated; so that it will be now expedient to consider, simply in themselves, these latter words; *Thy light is come*, and *The glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.*

So far as this prophecy hath respect to the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, that temporal deliverance, and the ensuing peace and prosperity, was their *light* and that Divine power by which it was effect-

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ed, was this *glory of the Lord*. And, indeed, both these expressions are frequently used in such a sense in holy writ. *When I waited for light, there came darkness*, says Job, chap. xxx. 26. So Isaiah lviii. 8, and many other places. And *the glory of the Lord* is used for a singular effect of his power, John xi. 40, Isaiah lx. 18, and elsewhere. But this literal sense is but a step to elevate the prophet to a sight of Christ's spiritual kingdom; which is usual with him, as our Savior himself testifies of another of his prophecies: *These things said Isaiah when he saw his glory, and spake of him.* John xii. 41. It was a sight of that same glory, that makes him say, *Thy light is come.*

In these words, there are three things concerning Christ, represented to the church's view. *First*, His beauty and excellency in that he is called *light*, and *the glory of the Lord*. *Secondly*, The church's propriety and interest in him, *thy light*, and *risen upon thee;* which hath a restrictive emphasis, as the very next verse doth clearly manifest. As he is *originally* the glory of the Lord, and the light of the Lord, *lumen de lumine*, so he is, *communicatively*, the church's light, and her glory too, as it is expressed in the 19th verse of the same chapter, *Thy God thy glory.* Thus hath she both his worth, and her own right in him, to consider. *Thirdly*, His presence, or her actual possession, *He is come and is risen.* And in these, the church and each faithful soul may find a double spring of affection, the one of love, the other of joy. The transcendent beauty of Christ makes him the choicest object of love, and her property in him, or title to him, together with possession, is the proper cause of solid joy.

First, then, this excellency is expressed by those two characters, *light* and *the glory of the Lord*. Concerning which, it will be fit both to demonstrate that they are the proper titles of Christ, and here to be taken for him; as also, to show what they signify in him.

Indeed the apostle in his second epistle to the Corinthians (ch. iii.) insists much in extolling both *the light* and *the glory* of the gospel, and in the 4th verse of the next chapter, speaks of *the light of the glorious gospel*, but he immediately intimates whence it hath this light and glory: *The glorious gospel of Christ*, says he, *who is the image of God.* So that it is most unnecessary to inquire whether the Messiah, or the word that reveals him, be rather here couched under these terms of *light* and *the glory of the Lord*. These two agree so well together, and these words agree so well with them both, that it were an injury to attempt to sever them. All the difference will be this; Christ is that incomplex and substantial light, the gospel that complex light wherein he appears. But (not to be guilty of *dark* terms, especially in a discourse of *light*), I take it, in this resemblance, Christ is the sun, and the gospel his proper sphere or heaven, wherein he gives light to his church. He is *primarily* the glory of the Lord, and the gospel is so by *participation*, because it declares him: so that much of that which shall be spoken here of Christ, will be secondarily to be understood of the gospel of Christ.

That Christ is *light*, the Scripture speaks abundantly. His own voice concerning himself, notwithstanding the cavil of the Pharisees, is above all exception, for he is truth itself: *I am the light of the world*, saith he; *he that follows me shall not walk in darkness.* John viii. 12. The Father who sent him, gives him the same title: *I will give thee for a light of the Gentiles*, Isa. xlii. 6; and xlix. 6. And not to multiply citations of the prophets and evangelists, who with one consent all magnify this light, take the true testimony of a false prophet; and, indeed, the favorable witness of an adversary is strongest: it is that of Balaam, who saw that Christ was *light*, though, because he saw him afar off (as he says himself), and had not his eye fortified, like the true prophets, he discerned him but as a star: *There shall come a star out of Jacob.* Numb. xxiv. 17. But what need we go so far, to be certified what this light and glory of the Lord is? The Lord of glory himself, in the very next verse to the text, assures us of it: *Upon thee shall the Lord arise.* And in the 19th verse, *The Lord shall be thy everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.*

By this time, I hope, it is clear, that the Eternal Son of God, co-essential with his Father, was he who gave accomplishment to this prophecy, by appearing to the world wrapped up in the darkness of human nature. He is that *day-spring from on high*, which *hath visited us*, as old Zacharias speaks, Luke i. 78.

Among all created excellences, none can be borrowed more fitly representing Christ than that of *light*. And is it not Christ that decks his church with supernatural beauty, and makes it indeed Κόσμος, a comely world, called out of the world? But the manifold agreement of light with Christ doth require more particular consideration.

Light is (as they call it) *primum visibile*, the first object of sight. And Jesus Christ, whom the apostle styles *God over all, blessed for ever*, is *primum intelligibile*, the prime object of the understanding. What is then become of that Divine spark, that understanding soul, which the Father of spirits breathes into these bodies, that all our thoughts creep here below, and leave their chief and noblest object unconsidered? Which of us may not complain (though few of us do), that our souls have either no wings to elevate themselves to the contemplation of him from whom they issued, or if they make attempts at it, our affections, engaged to the world, make us, like a bird tied by the foot, fall presently down again into the mire? It is high time to leave hunting shadows, and to turn our internal eye to the beholding of this uncreated light.

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In this elementary world, light being (as we here) the first thing visible, all things are seen by it, and it by itself. Thus is Christ among spiritual things, in the elect world of his church. *All things are made manifest by the light*, says the apostles, Ephes. v. 13, speaking of Christ, as the following verse doth evidently testify. It is in his word that he shines, and makes it a directing and convincing light, to discover all things that concern his church and himself, and to be known by its own brightness. How impertinent, then, is that question so much tossed by the Romish church, How know you the Scriptures (say they) to be the word of God, without the testimony of the church? I would ask one of them again, how they can know that it is daylight, except some one light a candle to let them see it. They are little versed in Holy Scripture, who know not that it is frequently called *light;* and they are senseless who know not that light is seen and known by itself. *If our gospel be hid*, says the Apostle, *it is hid to them that perish, the god of this world having blinded their minds against the light of the glorious gospel of Christ.* 2 Cor. iv. 3. No wonder if such stand in need of a testimony. A blind man knows not that it is light at noonday, but by report; not to those that have eyes, light is seen by itself.

Again, light makes all other things that are in themselves visible, to become actually visible, as they speak; so, by the word of this substantial *word*, Jesus Christ, all things in religion are tried and discovered. The very authority of the church, which they obtrude so confidently, must be stopped and examined by these Scriptures, which they would make stand to its courtesy. Doctrines and worship must be tried by this light; and that will not endure this trial, must not be endured in the house of God. *To the law and to the testimony*, says the prophet, *if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.* Isa. viii. 20. The rays of Christ's light are displayed through both his Testaments, and in them we see him.

But oh, how sublime is the knowledge of him! No one is ignorant that there is light, yet, what light is, few know; the best wits are troubled to define it: so, all that bear the name of Christians acknowledge that Christ *is*, but to know *what* he is, is of marvellous difficulty. In a speculative way, unsoundable is the depth of his nature and properties. *And his generation who can declare?* says our prophet, Isa. liii. 8. I define not, whether his eternal generation be meant, or his incarnation in time. These are mysteries that shall hold the very angels busy in admiration for ever. And as for experimental knowledge by faith, how small is the number of those that are truly acquainted with it!

Again, light fitly resembles Christ in *purity:* it visits many impure places, and lights upon the basest parts of the earth, and yet remains most pure and undefiled. Christ sees and takes notice of all the enormities and sinful pollutions in the world: as David says of the sun, *there is nothing hid from his beams:* yea, many of those foul evils he cures, and purgeth away these pollutions; and yet, he is never stained by them in the least degree. He is a physician not capable of infection, and therefore while he dwelt among men, he shunned not publicans and sinners, but sought them rather, for with such was his business and employment. Indeed, for a frail man to be too bold in frequenting profane and obstinate persons, though with intention to reclaim them, is not always so safe. *Metus est ne attrahant.* They may pull him in, who would help them forth, and pollute him who would cleanse them. But our Savior, the light of the world, runs no such hazard: he is stronger than the perversest sinner, yea, than the prince of darkness himself, over whom his banners are always victorious, and purer than to be in danger of pollution. His precious blood is *a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness:* sinners are purified by it, and it is not defiled by them. Thousands have washed in it, yet it shall abide, and always shall be most perfectly pure. *And such a high priest was needful for us, who is* ἄμιαντος, *undefiled*, and who, though conversant with sinners, to communicate to them his goodness, was yet *separate from sinners* in immunity from their evil. Heb. vii. 26.

To this agrees well that title which the prophet Malachi gives him, chap. iv. 2, when he calls him the *Sun of Righteousness*, full of purity and righteousness, as the sun is of light; all luminous, without spot; subject to no eclipse in himself, his light being his own, though our sins interposed may hide him sometimes from us, as those real eclipses in the sun are rather ours, for we are deprived of light, but not of the sun. Christ is in many ways most fitly called the Sun; for since all created light falls infinitely short of his worth, the prince and chief of lights, the sun, can not but suit best, so far as may be, to set forth his excellency.

The light of the sun is neither parted nor diminished, by being imparted to many several people and nations that behold it at one time; nor is the righteousness of this Sun of Righteousness either lessened to himself, or to individual believers, by many partaking of it at once: it is wholly conferred upon each one of them, and remains whole in himself. Hence it is, that not only Christ invites so liberally sinners to come to him, but even justified persons would so gladly draw all others to lay hold on this righteousness of their Redeemer; knowing well, that if all the world were enriched by it, they themselves would be no whit the poorer.

Again, the sun hath a vivifying power, not only upon plants and vegetables, but, if philosophers be right, *Sol et homo generant hominem*, it hath a special influence in the generation of man. But it is both more certainly

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and more eminently true of this Sun we speak of, in man's regeneration; that he is the proper and principal efficient of it. The evangelist calls him at once, *the light and the life of men.* John i. 4. To say nothing of him as a treasure, he is the source of our spiritual life and motion.

When the sun takes its course toward us in the season of the year, it drives away the sharp frosts of the heavy fogs of winter, it clears the heavens, decks the earth with variety of plants and flowers, and awakes the birds to the pleasant strains of their natural music. When Christ, after a kind of winter absence, returns to visit a declining church, admirable is the change that he produces: all begins to flourish by his sweet influence; his house, his worship, his people, are all clothed with a new beauty; but it is spiritual, and therefore, none but spiritual eyes can discern it. When he will thus return, all the power and policy of man can no more hinder him, than it could stay the course of the sun in its circle. In like manner, a deserted, forsaken soul, that can do nothing but languish and droop, while Christ withdraws himself, what inexpressible vigor and alacrity finds it at his returning! Then those graces which, while they lurked, seemed to have been lost and quite extinguished, bud forth anew with pleasant color and fragrant smell. It is the light of his countenance that banisheth their false fears, that strengthens their faith, and cures their spiritual infirmities. The Sun is indeed the sovereign physician: *Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing under his wings.* Mal. iv. 2.

Finally, all darkness flies away before him: it was his arising in the world that made the day break and the shadows fly away. The types and shadows of the law were then abolished. It was his light that dispelled the mists of ignorance and idolatry, and he alone delivers the soul from the night of sin and misery produced by it. All the stars, and the moon with them, can not make it day in the world; this is the sun's prerogative: nor can nature's highest light, the most refined science and morality, make it day in the soul; for this is Christ's.

The common light of reason, every man that comes into the world hath from him as his Creator; but the special light of grace, they alone who are *born again*, have from him as their Savior. Gross is the darkness of every natural mind, till Christ enlighten it: it can neither discern nor *receive* the things of God, οὐ δύχεται. *Ye were darkness*, says the apostle, *but now are ye light in the Lord.* Ephes. v. 8. The natural mind is nothing else but a mass of darkness; and the companion of darkness is confusion, as it was in the mass of the world before light was created. And what is there under heaven more confused than a carnal mind; the affections quite out of order, and though all naught, yet, sometimes fighting one with another, and continually hurrying the judgment whither they please? Now, to dissipate this darkness, and remedy this confusion, Christ shines externally in his word. But too much daily experience testifies, that this is not sufficient: therefore to those whom he will make children of the light, to meet with this outward light of his word, he gives another internal light by the Spirit. The sun can make dark things clear, but it can not make a blind man see them: but herein is the excellency of this Sun, that he illuminates not only the *object*, but the *faculty*; does not only reveal the mysteries of his kingdom, but opens blind eyes to behold them. And the first lineament of the renewed image of God in man, is that light in the understanding, removing not only that simple ignorance of divine things, but those misconceits, likewise, and false principles, and that wicked pertinacity, whereof man's mind is naturally full. He who *at first commanded light to shine out of darkness*, infuseth saving *knowledge and light* into the dark soul of man. And this light (as was said) kindles love. It is *vehiculum caloris*, hath a powerful influence, begetting heat in the affections. Nor can this divine light be ever again fully extinguished, but conducts the soul that hath received it, till it be received to the land of light and perfect happiness. Thus in our Redeemer is *the fountain of life*, as the psalmist speaks, and *in his light do we see light.* Psalm xxxvi. 9.

He is likewise here styled *the glory of the Lord.* In 2 Sam. iv. the ark of God is called *the glory*, but it enjoyeth that name as a type of Christ, in whom now that which the ark contained is fulfilled. The tabernacle is called *the dwelling of God's glory*, Psalm xxvi. 8, likewise typifying him, in the tabernacle of whose human nature that glory dwells far more excellently. John i. 14. Ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, *He dwelt in a tabernacle among us, and we saw his glory as the glory of the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth.* The author of the epistle to the Hebrews calls him ἀπαύγασμα, *the brightness of his Father's glory, and the character of his person.* Heb. i. 3. And under these expressions lies that remarkable mystery of the Son's eternal relation to the Father, which is rather humbly to be adored than boldly to be explained, either by God's perfect understanding of his own essence, or by any other notion. It is true, he is called *the wisdom of the Father*, but this wisdom is too wonderful for us. He is called *The Word*, but what this word means, I think we shall not well know till we see him face to face, and contemplate him in the light of glory. Meanwhile we may see him to be *the glory of the Lord*, in a safer way, and in a sufficient measure to guide us to that clear vision reserved above for us. *We saw his glory*, says that sublime evangelist. But how could

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this excellent glory be seen by sinful men, and not astonish and strike dead the beholders? *He was made flesh and dwelt among us*, says he, *and so we saw his glory*. That majesty which we could never have looked upon, he veiled with human flesh, that we might not die, yea, live by seeing him. There he stood behind the wall, and showed himself through the lattice. *In him dwelt the fulness of the Godhead*, Col. ii. 9, but it was σωματικῶς, *bodily*: for who could have endured the splendor of the Godhead's fulness, if that cloud of his body had not been drawn between? And through it did shine that grace and truth, that wisdom and power, in the work of our redemption, whereby he was clearly manifested to be *the glory of the Lord*.

Surely, we need not now ask the church, or a believing soul, *What is thy beloved more than another?* Or if we do, well may she answer, *He is the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely*; for he is *the light of the world* and *the glory of the Lord*. Let not the numerous titles of earthly potentates be once admitted into comparison with these. If we believe David, Psalm lxii. 9, the stateliest things and persons in the world, being balanced with *vanity* itself, are found lighter than *it*: and shall we offer to weigh them with Christ? If we knew him rightly, we would not sell the least glance or beam of this light of his countenance, for the highest favor of mortal man, though it were constant and unchangeable, which it is not. It is ignorance of Christ that maintains the credit of those vanities we admire. The Christian that is truly acquainted with him, enamored with the brightness of his beauty, can generously trample upon the smilings of the world with the one foot, and upon her frownings with the other. If he be rich or honorable, or both, yet, he glories not in that, but Christ, who is *the glory of the Lord*, is even then his chiefest glory; and the light of Christ obscures that worldly splendor in his estimation. And as the enjoyment of Christ overtops all his other joys, so it overcomes his griefs. As that great light drowns the light of prosperity, so it shines bright in the darkness of affliction: no dungeon so close that it can keep out the rays of Christ's love from his beloved prisoners. The world can no more take away this light, than it can give it. *Unto the just ariseth light in darkness*, says the psalmist; and, *When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me*, says the church, Mic. vii. 8. And as this light is a *comfort*, so it is likewise a *defence*, which suffers no more of distress to come near the godly, than is profitable for them. Therefore we find very frequently in Scripture, where this light and glory is mentioned, protection and safety jointly spoken of: *The Lord is my light, and withal my salvation: whom shall I fear?* says David, Psalm xxvii. 1. *The Lord is a sun, and he is a shield too*. Psalm lxxxiv. 11. And truly I think him shot-proof that hath the sun for his buckler. And for glory, *Upon all the glory shall be a defence*, says our prophet, chap. iv. 5. And the prophet Zachariah, where he calls the Lord the church's *glory in the midst of her*, calls him likewise, *a wall of fire round about her*, chap. ii. 4. The only way, then, to be safe, is to keep this light and the glory entire. To part with any part of this glory, is to make a breach in that wall of fire; and if that be a means of safety, let all men judge. No, keep it whole, and then they must come through the fire, who will assault you. Nor is this light only defensive of the church that embraceth it, but it is likewise destructive of all adverse powers. See a clear testimony for this in Isa. x. 17, 18. *And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame, and* (speaking there of the Assyrians) *it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day, and shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body, and they shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth*. Let ever then the church of God entirely observe this *light* and *glory of the Lord*; and she shall undoubtedly be preserved by it.

But to close in a word, first, to those who know this light, and then, to those who are yet strangers to it.

You who know Christ, glory in him perpetually. Well may he be your glory, when he is the glory of the Lord. There are some who pretend love to Christ, and yet, a taunting word of some profane miscreant will almost make them ashamed of him. How would they die for Christ, who are so tender as not to endure a scoff for him? Where is that spirit of Moses, who accounted the very *reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt?* Heb. xi. 26. Oh, learn to glory in Christ; think highly of him, and speak so too. Methinks it is the discourse in the world that becomes Christians best, to be speaking one to another honorably of Jesus Christ. And of all men, the preachers of his gospel should be most frequent in this subject. This should be their great theme, to extol and commend the Lord Jesus, that they may inflame many hearts with his love; and best can they do this, who are most strongly taken with this love themselves. Such will most gladly abase themselves, that Christ may be magnified; and whatsoever be their excellencies, they will still account Christ their glory. And they are richly repaid, for he accounts them his glory. This would seem a strange word, if it were not the apostle's: *They are the messengers of the churches and the glory of Christ*. 2 Cor. viii. 23. Delight who will, either in sloth or ignorance on the one hand, or in vain speculations and strains of frothy wit on the other; surely, those preachers only shall be approved in the great day, who have constantly endeavored,

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in their measure, to speak the best and fittest they could for their Master's advantage. And happy those Christians, of what estate soever, who in all estates make Christ their glory, and in all actions have their eye fixed upon his glory, who is their light and the glory of the Lord!

Now to those who are strangers to him (would to God none that are to be spoken to, were such!) to them, I say, notice is given both of the excellency and the necessity of Christ. Though it were possible to grope the way to happiness in the dark, yet, none will deny but to be conducted thither by a constant light is both more safe and more delightful. But were there any possibility of attaining that end without this light, the neglect of it were not altogether so strange. The wonder of all is this, that Christ alone being both that *life*, and the *way* to it, and the *truth*, or light, that guides in that way (John xiv. 6), yet Christians (so called) should esteem and look after him as little as if he were wholly needless! What meanest thou, O besotted sinner? Is it so light a thing to die in thy sins, and to die eternally for them, that thou wilt not so much as open and admit the light of salvation? What wilt thou pretend in that terrible day? Though all other kinds of people should offer some excuse, thou who hast heard the gospel, shalt be speechless. For not only shall the rigor of justice condemn thee, but mercy itself shall plead against thee; for thou hast despised it. That light did come and was not embraced, shall be the main condemnation. How many thousands who make no doubt of heaven, yet shall then fall short of it! It is not a superficial profession, that will then pass current. It is not some public sighs and groans from an unsanctified heart, which either come from custom, or some present touch of the word, nor yet is it some sudden risings of inward affection toward Christ, upon the report of his worth, that shall then serve the turn. The intellective knowledge of Christ, the distinct understanding, yea, the orthodox preaching of his gospel, the maintaining of his public cause, and suffering for it, shall not then be found sufficient. Only that peculiar apprehension of Christ, those constant flames of spiritual love, that even course of holy walking in his light, shall be those characters whereby Christ shall own his children, and admit them into the inheritance of perfect light. One of the speakers in the book of Job, discoursing of the prosperity of the ungodly, calls it but *his candle*, and tells how long it can last: *his candle* (says he) *shall be put out with him.* And that's the longest term of it: if it last his lifetime, it shall convey him no further; he goes into eternity in the dark, and therefore, as St. John says, he knows not whither he goeth. *Quò nunc abibis?* said that emperor (Adrian) to his soul. Is it not a sad thing when the soul that knows no other than worldly light, must take leave of it, and enter into eternal darkness, there to be incessantly tormented with present anguish, and the frightful expectation of the last judgment, when it must take again that body which was the accomplice of its wickedness, to be partaker of its punishment; when it shall have a double misery, to behold crowns of immortality distributed to the godly, after the short combats of this life, and itself thrust out among the devils? Then shall all men be in some way sensible, what is the worth of this now contemned *light*, the Lord Jesus Christ; the greatest number too late, for they shall be banished from it for ever. But the righteous shall then most perfectly know, and for ever enjoy, this light and glory of the Lord. *To whom, with the Father of lights, and the Spirit of grace, be eternity in praise and honor.*

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## SERMON VI.

### HOPE AMID BILLOWS.

WHAT *shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* said our Savior, who was to lay down a ransom for it, and knew well that it would cost infinitely more than the world was worth. Yet, the most of men value their own souls at a far lower rate than the whole world, losing them for broken morsels of it: yea, many times for vain hopes that are never accomplished. And as these men make a miserable bargain, so on the contrary, they that lose the world, or anything worldly, yea, though it were the whole, to save their souls, make a profitable loss of it. Nature teaches men to hazard and lose all for the life of the body rather than lose it (although it proves many times very uncomfortable by the loss of these outward things), and yet, the most part of men pass their whole lifetime without one serious thought of the excellency and importance of their souls, whose life and happiness is of a higher nature, and neither consists in, nor depends upon, anything here below. Hence it is, that while they use the helps of this present life, and the defences of it when it is in danger, and use them with so much diligence and attention, the means of that better life of their better part, their souls they either use not at all, or so slightly and coldly that they never find salvation in them.. You may find it some way in yourselves: the threatenings and preparations of men against you have awakened and roused you more to think upon means of your temporal safety; but how few are sensible and afraid of the wrath of God, who, as our Savior tells us, can kill both body and soul, and cast them into hell! You want not frequent advertisement from the word of God, so plentifully preached, that many are perishing, one part in gross ignorance of God, another in profane and licentious living, and the greatest part in a formal

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and lifeless profession of religion, without the power of it; and yet, where are they who lay it to heart, and bestir themselves to rescue their souls from destruction? Certainly, whatsoever men profess, it is unbelief that is the cause of impenitence. Men are not convinced of the purity of God's nature, nor sensible of the impurity of their own; therefore they apply not themselves in good earnest to the work of repentance, and to reformation, the liveliest part of it. Labor, then, for a more active and practical knowledge of God and Divine truths, such as may humble and renew your souls; not only that you may be delivered from outward troubles that threaten you, but much more, that you may escape the wrath to come. And because neither the word preached, nor judgments, nor mercies, that are set before you, are sufficient to quicken a dead soul, or soften a hard heart, without the effectual concurrence of the Spirit of God, let us have recourse to the throne of grace, by humble and earnest prayer, in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ.

### Psalm xlii. 8.

**Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.**

Man *is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward*, saith Eliphaz, Job v. 7. And as it is the corruption and sinfulness of his birth and nature, that has exposed him to trouble, so nature usually sets him at work, to look out for such things as may preserve and deliver him from trouble, or, at least, mitigate and temper the bitterness of it. And because there is not any one worldly thing that hath either certainty or sufficiency enough to serve at all times, therefore worldly and natural men are forced to make use of variety, and are but badly served with them all. The believing soul hath but one comfort whereon he relies, but it is a great one, which alone weighs down all the rest. *Bread strengthens, and wine makes glad the heart of man*, Psalm civ. 15. But *God is the strength of my heart*, says the psalmist, Psalm lxxiii. 26, and the *gladness* of it too: *Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than they have when their corn and wine increaseth.* Psalm vi. 7. And therefore, while the rest are seeking after some scattered crumbs of goodness in the creatures, and saying, *Who will show us any good?* he fixes his choice upon this one thing, *the light of God's countenance.* And it is the constant assurance of this that upholds him. *Waves* beat upon him, yea, and *go over him; yet, the Lord will command his loving kindness* to shine upon him.

In this psalm we may perceive the psalmist full of perplexed thoughts, and that between strong desires and griefs, and yet, in the midst of them, now and then, some advantage, and intermixing strains of hope with his sad complaints: for immediately before, we heard nothing but the impetuous noise of many waters, *deep calling unto deep*, in the former verse; we have here, as it were, a touch of the sweet sound of David's harp: *Yet the Lord will command his loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me.*

In the words we have *David's confidence* and *David's purpose:* the one suiting very well with the other. *His confidence* in God's loving kindness: *Yet the Lord will command his loving kindness.* And his *purpose: And in the night his song shall be with me.*

It is true, the latter words, *In the night his song shall be with me*, may be taken as a part of the expression of his confidence, taking the *song* for the matter or subject of the song, the *goodness of God:* as if he should say, Both in the day and in the night, I shall find the sweet fruits of God's favor and loving kindness. But not excluding that, I rather take it to be intended as his *resolution*, that it should be his custom in the quiet season of the night, to look back upon God's goodness manifested to him in the actions and occurrences of the day; and thus entertaining his soul with that secret discourse, he would stir it up to the praises of his God, and withal would join prayer for the continuance and further manifestation of it. David (as was hinted before) intermixes strains of hope, not that faint and common hope of *possibility* or *probability*, that after stormy days it may be better with him, but a *certain hope* that shall never make *ashamed;* such a *hope* as springs from *faith*, yea, in effect, is one with it. Faith rests upon the goodness and truth of Him who hath promised, and hope, raising itself upon faith so established, stands up and looks out to the future accomplishment of the promise. Therefore the apostle calls Faith, *the substance of things hoped for,* ὑπόστασις *and the evidence of things not seen.* Heb. xi. 1. Of all other hope it is *true, Spes est nomen boni incerti:* It is the name of uncertain good. But this can say, *The Lord will command his loving kindness.*

*The Lord will command.* What a sudden change is here! Would you think this were the same man that was even now almost overwhelmed? Thus faith always conquers, though seldom, or never, without a hard conflict; not only assaulted by troubles without, but, which is worse, by incredulity within; nor assaulted only, but many times brought under; yet does it not succumb and give over, knowing that even after many foils, yet, in the end, it shall overcome.

His *confidence* you may consider, first, *oppositely*, and then *positively*, or simply in itself. Oppositely both to his present trouble, and to his complaints, wherein this trouble is expressed: and that is fitly implied, though it be not in the original.

Though the multitude and weight of Job's afflictions did force out of him some bitter words, and made him look back upon the day of his birth, and curse it; yet faith re-



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covers him from his distemper, and makes him look forward with joy, even as far as to the blessed day of his resurrection: *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet, in my flesh shall I see God.* Job xix. 25. The former words of impatience he spake indeed, but he adheres to *these*, and wishes that they were *written with an iron pen, and engraven to abide for ever.* Therefore we hear of him again in scripture, as a *righteous* and *patient* man, but of these words of his impatience not a word. In the lxxviith Psalm, what sad expostulations are those the psalmist uses, *Will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?* But see how he corrects them, ver. 10: *Then I said, this is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.* Thus Jonah (ch. ii. 3, 4) speaks in a strain much like this; but there it was literally true, that God had *cast* him *into the deep.* And here, *deep calls unto deep*, yet, in the midst of those deeps, faith is not drowned: you see it lifts up its head above water: *Yet, the Lord will command*, &c. Yea, though it takes particular notice of God's hand in the affliction, yet it goes not to another hand for comfort: it is *Thy* waves and *Thy* billows, yet that same God whose waves are like to destroy me, will ere long *command his loving kindness to shine upon me.* So Job xiii. 15. *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* A wonderful expression of faith! He says not, though he afflict me sore, but, Though he *slay* me; not, Though evil men or Satan should do it, but, Though *he* slay me, yet will I trust in *him.* What troubled mind can imagine any thing harder against itself than this?

1. Learn, then, to check those excessive doubts and fears, by some such resolute word as this. Turn the promise, first upon thyself, and then upon God. Consider that he hath promised life eternal to believers, and then say, "Though I saw his hand as it were lifted up to destroy me, yet from that very hand will I expect salvation; for I have his word engaged for it, that if I believe, I shall be saved." I do not say, that a soul under temptation can assure itself that God is already reconciled to it: and herein possibly lies oftentimes the mistake; for this reflex act of assurance, though it be our duty to seek after it, is itself rather a gift and reward than a duty. But the direct and proper act of faith is of perpetual use and necessity, and then most when there is least sense of assurance. And it is no other than a recumbency or reliance, a rolling over of the soul upon free mercy. That which breeds us much perplexity, is, that we would invert God's order. If I knew, say some, that the promise belonged to *me*, and that Christ were a Savior to *me*, I could believe. That is to say, I would first see, and then believe. But the true method is just contrary. *I had fainted*, says David, *unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord.* He believed it first, and saw it afterward. And in this same psalm, laboring to still his disquieted soul by elevating it above his troubles to look upon his God, he says to it, *Hope in him now*, and, ere it be long, *thou shalt praise him for the help of his countenance*, even while His countenance is withheld. And thus faith ought to triumph over spiritual fears and difficulties.

2. How incongruous is it, that outward dangers or trials should overmatch it! Will you trust God upon his word, for salvation and eternal happiness, and be diffident for the safety and needful blessings of this temporal life, which life, in comparison, is but for a moment, and the best things of it but dross? Consider that you dishonor faith exceedingly, and degenerate from the believing saints of former ages. Indeed, the promises of this life, and that which concerns it, though godliness hath them, yet, they are not so absolute, nor are they so absolutely needful for you. But considering the wisdom and love of your heavenly Father, learn to compose your minds by it.

*I will not be afraid, though ten thousands of the people set themselves against me round about*, says David. Psalm iii. 6. And lest you think him singular, in the 46th Psalm, it is the joint voice of the whole church of God: *We will not fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea: though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God: the holy place of the tabernacle of the most high God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved.* That is the way to be immoveable in the midst of troubles, as a rock amidst the waves. When God is in the midst of a kingdom or city, he makes it firm as Mount Sion, that can not be removed. When he is in the midst of a soul, though calamities throng about it on all hands, and roar like the billows of the sea, yet, there is a constant calm within, such a peace as the world can neither give nor take away. On the other side, what is it but want of lodging God in the soul, and that in his stead the world is in the midst of men's hearts, that makes them shake like the leaves of trees at every blast of danger? What a shame is it, seeing natural men, by the strength of nature, and by help of moral precepts, have attained such undaunted resolution and courage against outward changes, that yet they who would pass for Christians, are so soft and fainting, and so sensible of the smallest alterations! The advantage that we have in this regard is infinite. What is the best ground-work of a philosopher's constancy

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but as moving sands in comparison of the Rock that we may build upon? But the truth is, that either we make no provision of faith for times of trial, or, if any we have, we neither know the worth nor the use of it, but lay it by, as a dead unprofitable thing, when we should most use and exercise it. Notwithstanding all our frequenting of God's house, and our plausible profession, is it not too true, that the most of us either do not at all furnish ourselves with those spiritual arms that are so needful in the militant life of a Christian, or we learn not how to handle them, and are not in readiness for service? As was the case of that improvident soldier, whom his commander found mending some piece of his armor, when they were to give battle. It were not amiss, before afflictions overtake us, to try and train the mind somewhat by supposing the very worst and hardest of them; to say, What if the waves and billows of adversity were swelled and flowing in upon me; could I then believe? God hath said, *I will not fail thee nor forsake thee*, with a heap of negations: *In no wise, I will not.* He hath said, *When thou passest through the fire and through the water, I will be with thee.* These I know, and can discourse of them; but could I repose and rest upon them in the day of trial? Put your souls to it. Is there any thing or person that you esteem and love exceedingly? Say, *What if I should lose this?* Is there some evil that is naturally more contrary and terrible to you than many others? Spare not to present that to the imagination too, and labor to make faith master of it beforehand in case it should befall you: and if the first thought of it scare you, look upon it the oftener, till the visage of it become familiar to you, that you start and scare no more at it. Nor is there any danger in these thoughts. Troubles can not be brought the nearer by our thus thinking on them: but you may be both safer and stronger by breathing and exercising of your faith in supposed cases. But if you be so tender-spirited, that you can not look upon calamities so much as in thought or fancy, how would you be able for a real encounter? No, surely. But the soul that hath made God his stay, can do both. See it in that notable resolution of the prophet, Hab. iii. 17: *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength.* And in that of David, Psalm xxiii. 4: *Yea*, says he, *though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.* You see how faith is a cork to his soul, keeping it from sinking in the deeps of afflictions. Yea, that big word which one says of his morally just man, is true of the believer: *Si fractus illabatur orbis—Though the very fabric of the world were falling about him, yet would he stand upright and undaunted in the midst of its ruins.*

In this *confidence*, considered in itself, we may observe, 1. The *object* of it: *The loving kindness of the Lord.* 2. The manner or way by which he expects to enjoy it. *The Lord will command it.* 3. The time: *In the day.*

1. The object: *His loving kindness.* He says not, *The Lord will command my return to the house of God*, or, *will accomplish my deliverance from the heavy oppression and sharp reproaches of the enemy*, which would have answered more particularly and expressly to his present griefs, but, *will command his loving kindness.* And the reason of his thus expressing himself, I conceive to be twofold. [1.] In the assurance of this, is necessarily comprised the certainty of all other good things. This special favor and benignity of the Lord doth engage his power and wisdom (both which you know are infinite) to the procurement of everything truly good for those whom he so favors. Therefore it is, that David chooses rather to name the streams of particular mercies in this their living Source and Fountain, than to specify them severally. Nor is it only thus more compendious, but the expression is fuller too, which are the two great advantages of speech. And this I take to be the other reason: [2.] A man may enjoy great deliverances, and many positive benefits from the hand of God, and yet have no share in *his loving kindness.* How frequently doth God heap riches, and honor, and health, on those he hates, and the common gifts of the mind too, wisdom and learning, yea, the common gifts of his own Spirit, and give a fair and long day of external prosperity to those on whom he never vouchsafed the least glance of his favorable countenance! Yea, on the contrary, he gives all those specious gifts to them with a secret curse! As he gave a king in wrath to his people, so he often gives kingdoms in his wrath to kings. Therefore David looks higher than the very kingdom which God promised him and gave him, when he speaks of *his loving kindness.* In a word, he resolves to solace himself with the assurance of this, though he was stripped of all other comforts, and to quiet his soul herein, till deliverance should come; and when it should come, and whatsoever mercies with it, to receive them as fruits and effects of this *loving kindness:* not prizing them so much for themselves, as for the impressions of that love which is upon them. And it is that image and superscription that both engages and moves him most to pay his tribute of praise. And truly, this is everywhere David's temper: his frequent distresses and wants never excite him so much to desire any particular comfort in the creature,

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as to entreat the presence and favor of God himself. His saddest times are when, to his sense, this favor is eclipsed. *In my prosperity I said, I shall not be moved.* And what was his adversity that made him of another mind? *Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.* This verifies his position in that same Psalm. *In thy favor is life.* Thus, in the 63d Psalm, at the beginning, *My soul thirsteth for thee, in a dry land where there is no water:* not for water, where there is none, but, *for thee where there is no water.* Therefore he adds, in verse 3, *Thy loving kindness is better than life.* And all that be truly wise, are of this mind, and will subscribe to his choice. Let them enjoy this loving kindness and prize it, because, whatever befalls them, their happiness and joy is above the reach of all calamities. Let them be derided and reproached abroad, yet still, this inward persuasion makes them glad and contented. As a rich man said, though the people hated and taunted him, yet, when he came home and looked upon his chests, *Ego-met mihi plaudo domi;* with how much better reason do believers bear out external injuries! What inward contentment is theirs, when they consider themselves as truly enriched with the favor of God! And as this makes them contemn the contempts that the world puts upon them, so, likewise, it breeds in them a neglect and disdain of those poor trifles that the world admires. The sum of their desires is (as that of the cynic's was, the sunshine), that the rays of the love of God may shine constantly upon them. The favorable aspect and large proffers of kings and princes, would be unwelcome to them, if they should stand between them and the sight of that Sun. And truly they have reason. What are the highest things the world affords? What are great honors and great estates, but great cares and griefs well dressed and colored over with a show of pleasure, that promise contentment, and perform nothing but vexation? That they are not satisfying, is evident; for the obtaining of much of them doth but stretch the appetite, and teach men to desire more. They are not solid, neither. Will not the pains of a gout, of a strangury, or some such malady (to say nothing of the worst, the pains of a guilty conscience), blast all these delights? What relish finds a man in large revenues and stately buildings, in high preferments and honorable titles, when either his body or his mind is in anguish! And besides the emptiness of all these things, you know they want one main point, *continuance.* But the loving kindness of God hath all requisites to make the soul happy. *O, satisfy us early with thy goodness* (or *mercy*), says Moses, *that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.* Psalm xc. 14. There is *fulness* in that for the vastest desires of the soul—*satisfy us*: there is *solid contentment*—that begets true *joy and gladness;* and there is *permanency*—*all our days.* It is the only comfort of this life, and the assurance of a better. This were a large subject to insist on, but certainly the naming of *his loving kindness* should beget in each heart a high esteem of it, an ardent desire after it. And if it do so with you, then know, that it is only to be found in the way of holiness. He is a holy God, and can love nothing that is altogether unlike himself. There must always be some similitude and conformity of nature to ground kindness and friendship upon, and to maintain it. That saying is true, *Idem velle et idem nolle, firma amicitia.* What gross self-flattery is it, to think that God's loving kindness can be toward you, while you are in love with sin, which he so perfectly hates! How can the profane swearer, or voluptuous person, or the oppressor and covetous, or the close hypocrite (worse than any of them), rest upon the loving kindness of the Lord in the day of troubles? No, surely. But the terror of his wrath shall be added to all their other calamities; and they shall find it heavier than all the rest. God will not pour this precious oil of gladness, this persuasion of his love, into filthy vessels. Even his own children, when they grieve and sadden his holy Spirit by unholiness, shall be sadly punished by the withdrawing of those comforting and sensible expressions of his love.

Labor, then, you who as yet never tasted of this love, to know what it means. Forsake and hate that which hitherto has made you strangers to it; for if you obtain this, it shall comfort you when those things can not, but would rather prove your greatest torment. And you who have received any testimonies of it, entertain it carefully, for it is your best comfort both in your best days and in your worst days too.

You would all gladly be delivered from the many evils that threaten you; for many they be indeed, and peace is a great blessing. But suppose you were secured from all those fears, and he should command a sudden calm (which truly he can do), would you then think yourselves happy? That life of yours which you so fear to lose by fire or sword, though you had peace, would ere long fall into the hands of some ague, or fever, or consumption, and perish by them; or at the longest, a few years will end it: it is a lighted candle, which, though nobody blow out, will quickly burn out of itself. But this loving kindness is not so short lived: it shall last as long as your souls, and so long as it lasts, they shall be happy. Those goods that you fear shall be pillaged and spoiled in war, how many hazards are they subject to even in peace! Solomon tells you, that *riches oftentimes,* though nobody should take them away, *make themselves wings, and fly away.* And truly, many times the undue sparing of them, is but the letting of their wings grow, which makes them readier to fly away: and the contributing a part of them to do good, only clips

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their wings a little, and makes them stay the longer with their owner. But this by the way. Howsoever, *in the day of death, and in the day of wrath*, as Solomon says, *they profit nothing at all*. Prov. xi. 4. So, then, though you may desire that God would command deliverance for you, yet, if you would be truly happy, your greater and more earnest suit should be, that he would *command his loving kindness* to appear to your souls. And having once obtained this, you may possibly be persecuted, and endure hard trials, but one thing is made sure, you can not be miserable. Nor shall you want temporal mercies and preservation too, so far as they are good for you. The inward assurance of this love shall carry you strangely and sweetly through all outward vicissitudes; and when the day shall come, that all other comforts shall look pale upon you, then shall you find the worth and happiness of this more than ever before. Observe,

2. The manner in which the psalmist expects to enjoy the object of his confidence. *The Lord will command*, make it appear to me. Sometimes God is said to shut up and hide his love from his children, and that is a mournful time with them. But we read not that he shuts *out* his love, and ceaseth altogether to have affection to those whom once he loved. And therefore, when he shows himself again, in the gracious manifestations of his mercy, he is not said to begin anew to love them, but only to *command his love*, which erewhile he had countermanded to appear.

3. The time: *In the day*. If you have a mind to take the *day* and *night*, figuratively, for prosperous and adverse times, it would lead you, in that sense, to observe David's constancy in God's praises; which was such that not only in the day of deliverance, but even in the night of distress, he resolved a song for God. And truly, many times God gives his children in an afflicted condition, more sweetness of spirit, more aptitude, not only to pray, but to praise, and more spiritual delight in himself, than in times of outward peace and prosperity. *He giveth songs in the night*, said Job; and you know the sound of music is most delightful in the night. But to take it properly, David is confident that in the several actions and occurrences of *the day* he should find the *goodness and favorable assistance* of the Lord; and then he resolves (which leads to the other part of the text) *in the night time to meditate on that goodness, and to frame a song of praise to the Author of it*.

And indeed, what is the whole thread of our life, but a checkered twist, black and white, of delights and dangers interwoven? and the happiest passing of it, is constantly to enjoy and to observe the experiences of God's goodness, and to praise him for them. David was a wise king, and withal a valiant soldier, and yet we see he thought not this experience inconsonant with either of these two conditions. This precious book of Psalms (a great part thereof being his) testifies clearly that prayer and praises were his great employment. A religious disposition of mind may not only consist with fortitude and magnanimity, but is indeed the best principle and cause of both, contrary to the wicked and foolish opinion of profane persons. Whether of the two, do you think, might welcome a day of battle with most courage and resolution, he that had passed the preceding night in revelling and carousing, or he that had spent it in prayer, and obtained some assurance of a better life? Truly, if they went on with equal forwardness, there is no man, except he were an atheist, but would judge the one to be brutish fury and precipitation, and the other true valor.

*His song*. In the worst estate there is ever some matter of praise to be mixed with request; and truly, we may justly suspect that our neglect of praises makes our prayers unacceptable.

*And my prayer*. In the best estate here below, praise must be accompanied with prayer. Our wants, and necessities, and straits, return daily upon us, and require new supplies of mercy; and prayer, if we know how to use it right, is the way to obtain them all.

*To the God of my life*, or, *the God that is my life*. This word is added, as the reason of all that went before. If you ask David why he reposeth so much upon the loving kindness of God, what he means, to spend so much pains in praises and prayer to God; he answers, *Because he is my life*. He is the author and preserver of my temporal life, and all the passages and accidents of it are in his hand alone. He hath also given me, and he maintains in me a spiritual life; yea, he is the life of my soul: it lives by union with him, as my body does by union with it, and he hath laid up life eternal for me. Would Christians think thus indeed, the light of this consideration would dispel their distrustful fears. Certainly there is atheism at the bottom of them; if not a denial or a misconceit of God, at least a forgetfulness of God. See Isa. li. 12, 13: *I, even I, am he that comforteth you. Who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man, which shall be made as grass, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?* Consider, then, that men have no power over our present life, but by the appointment of God. And beside that, we have another life which is infinitely more precious than this: a life spiritual, and which is the beginning of eternal life; and this is altogether out of danger from them. *Our life is hid with Christ in God*. Col. iii. 3. It is *hid*, and wicked men can not so much as see it: how then should they take it from us, seeing it is *hid?* And that not meanly: it is *hid*

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*with Christ in God.* What then shall become of it? Read the next verse, and read it to your comfort, for there is abundance in it, if you look right upon it. *When Christ, who is our life shall appear, we likewise shall appear with him in glory.* They that are in God, being united to him through Christ, can never by any power be separated from him. It is an indissoluble union. Death itself, that is the great dissolver of all other unions, civil and natural, is so far from untying this, that it consummates it: it conveys the soul into the nearest and fullest enjoyment of God, who is its life, where it shall not need to desire that God would *command* (or *send*) *his loving kindness*, as it were from a distance: it shall be then at the spring-head, and shall be satisfied with his love for ever.

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## SERMON VII.

### GENEROUS GRIEF.

WHEREFORE *do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not?* says the prophet. Isaiah lv. 2. All men agree in this, that they would willingly meet with some satisfying good; and yet, if you look aright upon the projects and labors of the greatest part, you shall find them flying from it, and taking much pains to be miserable. And truly, considering the darkness that is upon the soul of man, it is no great wonder to see those miss their way, and continue wandering, who hear not the voice of the gospel to recall them, and see not its light to direct them. But this is somewhat strange, that where true happiness, and the true way to it are propounded and set before men, so few should follow it in good earnest. If the excellency of that good did not allure them, yet one would think that their many disappointments in all other things, should drive them home to it. How often do we run ourselves out of breath after shadows! And when we think we have overtaken them, and would lay hold of them, we find nothing. And yet, still we love to befool ourselves, even against our own experience, which, we say, uses to make fools wiser. Still we choose rather to shift from one vanity to another, than to return to that Sovereign Good, that alone can fill the vastest desires of our souls; rather to run from one *broken cistern* to another, as the prophet calls them, yea, and to take pains to *hew them out*, than have recourse to that *Fountain of living waters.* One main thing that makes men thus rove and wander is, that they do not reflect upon their own course, nor upon themselves, what is the main end they aim at, and then see whether their way be suitable to that end. If they would be happy (as who would not?) then surely, things that are empty, and uncertain, and certainly perishing, will not serve the turn. And truly, as the thought would be seasonable at any time, so especially to us in these times, wherein, beside the common uncertainty of outward things, there is an apparent visible hazard that men's lives and fortunes are likely to be put to. Will you make advantage and gain of your trouble? Thus: The looser you find other things tied to you, and as it were upon a running knot, secure that one thing, and your portion in it, which is worth all the rest; yea, far above them all, and that alone which can be secured, and made certain. Wanting this, what though you had peace, and health, and all imaginable prosperity, you would still be miserable, being liable to the wrath of God, and eternal destruction. But if once united to Christ, and in him reconciled to God, and entitled to heaven, what can fall amiss to you? You shall have joy in the midst of sorrow and affliction, and peace in the midst of war, yea, and life in death. But think not to attain this assurance while you continue profane and Godless, not seeking it in the way of holiness, for there alone it is to be found. And withal beg it of God by humble prayer.

PSALM cxix. 136.

Rivers of waters run down mine eyes: because they keep not thy law.

LOVE is the leading passion of the soul: all the rest follow the measure and motion of it, as the lower heavens are said to be wheeled about with the first.

We have here a clear instance of it in the psalmist, who is testifying his love to God, by his esteem and love of the law or word of God. What is each of the several verses of this Psalm, but a several breathing and vent of this love, either in itself, or in the causes, or in the effects of it? Where he sets forth the excellencies and utilities of God's law, there you have the *causes* of his love. His observing and studying of it, his desire to know it more and observe it better, these are the *effects* of his affection to it. The love itself he often expresseth, ver. 47, 48, 113, and 140. *Thy word is pure; therefore thy servant loveth it.* And ver. 127: *I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold.* But as scarcely accounting that love which can be uttered, how much it is, ver. 97, he expresseth it most by intimating that he can not express it: *O, how I love thy law!* Hence are his desires (which are love in pursuit) so earnest after it. Among many, that is pathetical, verse 20: *My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgment at all times.* Hence, likewise, his joy and delight (which are love in possession), verse 14: *I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches;* and ver. 16, *I will delight myself in thy statutes; I will not forget thy word.* We have his hatred of things opposite (which is love's antipathy), ver. 113, *I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love.*

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ver. 163, *I hate and abhor lying, but thy law do I love.* And in the 139th verse you shall find his zeal (which is no other than the fire of love stirred up or blown into a flame), *My zeal hath consumed me; because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.* And (to omit the rest) in the 158th verse, his love to the law, shows its sympathy in sorrow for the violation of the law: *I beheld the trangressors and was grieved; because they kept not thy word.* And here you find this grief swelling to such a height, that it runs over into abundant tears. *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes; because they keep not thy law.*

The words have briefly, these *rivers* in their *channel* and *course. They run down mine eyes;* and then, in their *spring and cause*, to wit, the psalmist's sympathy with God's law broken by men, in the latter clause of the verse, *because they keep not thy law.* But both together clearly teach us, *That godly men are affected with deep sorrow for the sins of the ungodly.*

More particularly consider, I. The object of this affection. II. The nature of it. III. The degree or measure of it. IV. Its subject.

I. The *object* is, the transgression of the law, or, to take it (as in the text) *in concreto*, men transgressors of the law: *They keep not thy law.* It is true, *the whole creation groaneth* under the burden of sin, in the effects of it, as the Apostle speaks, Rom. viii. 32; but sin itself is man's enemy, he being that reasonable creature to whom the law was given. Now in the general it is a matter of grief to a godly mind to consider the universal depravedness of man's nature; that he is a *transgressor from the womb;* that *the carnal mind is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither,* while it remains such, *can it be.* Rom. viii. 6. And this grief will go the deeper by remembering whence he is fallen. When he was new come forth of the hands of his Maker, that image of God which he stamped upon him shined bright in his soul: the whole frame of it was regular and comely, the inferior faculties obeying the higher, and all of them subject unto God. But how soon was he seduced, and then what a great change ensued! *Quantum mutatus ab illo!* There is ever since, such a tumult and confusion in the soul, that it can not hear the voice of God's law, much less obey and keep it. Hence is that complaint of the psalmist oftener than once, *They are all gone out of the way, and become abominable: there is none that doth good, no, not one. Mundus immundus,* ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κεῖται, *lies buried in it,* as the word is used in the inscription of tombs, ἐνθάδε κεῖται. Look abroad in the world, and what shall ye see but a sea of wickedness over the face of the whole, which draws from a godly, discerning eye that beholds it, these *rivers of tears?* The greatest part not knowing the true God, nor the true religion and the true way of his worship. And for those that do, yet, how unlike are they to it in their lives! The reformed churches this way, how unreformed are they in a great part!

But more particularly to branch this out a little in respect to several sorts of men, this godly grief is a very large sphere; it will extend to remote people, remote every way, not only in place but in manners and religion, even to heathens and gross idolaters. Yea, the very sins of enemies, and of such as are professed enemies to God, yet move the tender-hearted Christian to sorrow and compassion. *Of whom I now tell you weeping,* says St. Paul, *that they are enemies to the cross of Christ.* Phil. iii. 8. *Enemies,* and yet he speaks of them *weeping.* What he writes concerning them, he would have written in tears, if that had been legible. Thus you see the *extension* of this grief. But yet, out of all question, it will be more *intense* in particulars of nearer concernment. It is the burden of the pious man's heart, that his law who made the world and gives being to all things, should be so little regarded, and so much broken through all the world; but yet more especially, that in his own church, among his own people, transgression should abound. Sins within the church are most properly scandals. God manifest himself (so to speak) most sensible of those, and therefore the godly man is so too. Whether they be the continual enormities of licentious and profane persons, which are by external profession in the face of the visible church (though indeed they be in it but as *spots* and *blemishes,* as the apostle speaks; 2 Pet. ii. 13), or whether it be the apostacy of hypocrites; or (which sometimes falls out) the gross falls of true converts; all these are the great grief of the godly. The relations of men, either natural or civil, will add something too; this sorrow will in such cases be greater than ordinary in a Christian: he will melt it in a particular tenderness for the sins of his kindred, parents or children, husband or wife; and most of all, ministers will grieve for the sins of their people. How pathetically does this appear in St. Paul! *And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness, and fornication, and lasciviousness, which they have committed,* 2 Cor. xii. 21. A man can not but be more particularly touched with the sins of that nation, and of that city, and congregation and family, whereof he is a member. So we read of Lot, 2 Pet. ii. 8: *For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul, from day to day, with their unlawful deeds.* The sins of more eminent persons, either in church or commonwealth, will most affect a prudent Christian, because their inclinations and actions import the public much. Therefore the apostle, when he had exhorted to *supplications and prayers for all men,* particularly mentions *kings,* and *such as are in authority.* 1 Tim. i. 2. And truly, when they

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are abused by misadvice and corrupt counsel, some of these tears were very well spent, if poured forth before God in their behalf: for *in his hand*, as that wise king confesseth, *are their hearts*, there compared to *rivers of waters;* let their motion be never so impetuous, yet *he turneth them whithersoever he pleaseth.* Prov. xxi. 1. And who knows but *these* rivers of waters, these tears, may prevail with the Lord to reduce the violent current of that river, a king's heart, from the wrong channel?

II. But to proceed: the second thing to be considered in this affection, is, the *nature* of it. (1.) It is not a stoical apathy, and affected carelessness; much less a delightful partaking with sinful practices. (2.) Not a proud setting off of their own goodness, with marking the sin of others, as the Pharisee did in the gospel. (3.) Not the derision and mocking of the folly of men, with that *laughing philosopher:* it comes nearer to the temper of the *other* who *wept* always for it. It is not a bitter, bilious anger, breaking forth into railings and reproaches, nor an upbraiding insultation. Nor is it a vindictive desire of punishment, venting itself in cursings and imprecations, which is the rash temper of many, but especially of the vulgar sort. The disciples' motion to Christ was far different from that way, and yet he says to them, *You know not of what spirit ye are.* They thought they had been of Elijah's spirit, but he told them they were mistaken, and did not know of what spirit they were in that motion. Thus heady zeal often mistakes and flatters itself. We find not here a desire of fire to come down from heaven upon the breakers of the law, but such a grief as would rather bring water to quench it, if it were falling on them. *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes.*

III. The *degree* of this sorrow: it is vehement, not a light, transient dislike, but a deep resentment, such as causeth not some few sighs, or some drops of tears, but *rivers—Palge maijim. Pelagus aquarum.* It is true, the *measure and degree* of sorrow for sin, whether their own or others, are different in divers persons, who are yet true mourners; and they are also different in the same person, at divers times, not only upon the difference of the cause, but even where the cause is equal, upon the different influence and working of the Spirit of God. Sometimes it pleaseth him to warm and melt the heart more abundantly, and so he raises these *rivers*, in those eyes, to a higher tide than ordinary; sometimes they remove again. But yet this godly sorrow is always serious and sincere; and that is the other quality here remarkable in it. It is not a histrionical weeping, only in public; for the speech is here directed to God, as a more frequent witness of these tears than any other; who is always the witness of the sincerity of them, even when they can not be hid *from the eyes of men.* For I deny not but they may, and should, have vent in public, especially at such times as are set apart for solemn mourning and humiliation. Yet, even then, usually these streams run deepest, where they are stillest and most quietly conveyed. But surely they should not be fewer and less frequent, alone, than in company, for that is a little subject to suspicion. See Jer. ix. 1: *Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.* And, xiii. 17; *But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive.*

IV. The *subject* of this affection is, not to the ungodly themselves, who are professed transgressors of this law; they rather make *a sport of sin*, as Solomon speaks; they play and make themselves merry with it, as the Philistines did with Samson, till it brings the house down about their ears; but the godly are they that are affected with this sorrow, such as are careful observers of the law themselves, and mourn first for their own breaches: for these are the only fit mourners for the transgression of others.

Now to inquire a little into the *cause* of this, why the breaking of God's law should cause such sorrow in the godly, as here breaketh forth into abundance of tears. We shall find it very reasonable if we consider, 1. The nature of sin, which is the *transgression*, or breach *of the law*, as the apostle defines it. 2. The nature of this sorrow and these tears. 3. The nature of the godly.

1. Sin is the greatest evil in the world; yea, truly, in comparison, it alone is worth the name of *evil*, and therefore may justly challenge sorrow, and the greatest sorrow. The greatest of evils it is, both *formally*, in that it alone is the defilement and deformity of the soul, and *casually*, being the root whence all other evils spring; the fruitful womb that conceives and brings forth all those miseries that either man feels, or hath cause to fear. Whence are all those personal evils incident to men in their estates, or in their bodies, or minds, outward turmoils and diseases, and inward discontents, and death itself, in all the kinds of it; are they not all the fruits of that bitter root? Whence arise those public miseries of nations and kingdoms, but from the epidemic national sins of the people, as the deserving and procuring cause at God's hand, and withal, oftentimes from the ambitious and wicked practices of some particular men, as the working and effecting causes? So that every way, if we follow these evils home to their original, we shall find it to be sin, or the breaking of God's law. Ungodly men, though they meddle not with public affairs at all, yea, though they be faithful and honest in meddling with them, yet, by reason of their impious lives, are traitors to their nation they are truly the incendiaries of states and

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kingdoms. And these mourners, though they can do no more, are the most loyal and most serviceable subjects, bringing tears to quench the fire of wrath, *rivers of waters*. And therefore sorrow and tears are not only most due to sin, as the greatest of evils, but they are best bestowed upon it, if they can do any thing to its redress, because that is both the surest and most compendious way to remedy all the rest, sin being the source and spring of them all.

This is the reason why Jeremiah, ch. ix. 1, when he would weep for the *slain* of his people, is straightway led from that to bewail the *sin* of his people, ver. 2, 3. And in his Book of *tears* and *lamentations*, he often reduces all these sad evils, to sin as causing them, particularly ch. v. 16, *The crown is fallen from our head. Wo unto us, that we have sinned!* He turns the complaint more to the sin than to the affliction.

2. Consider the nature of these tears. Tears spent for worldly crosses, are all lost; they run all to waste; they are *lachrymæ inanes*, empty, fruitless things. But tears shed for the breach of God's law, are the means to quench God's wrath. The prayers and tears of some few, may avert the punishment of many, yea, of a whole land. And if not so, yet they are not lost; the mourners themselves have always benefit by them: as you have it in that known place, Ezek. ix. 4, they that mourned for the common abominations were *marked*, and the common desolation took not hold on them. This mourning for other men's wickedness, both testifies and preserves the godly man's innocence. I say, it preserves it, as well as testifies it: it keeps him from the contagion of that bad air he lives in; for without this, sin would soon grow familiar. It is good for men to keep up and maintain in their souls a dislike of sin; for when once it ceaseth to be displeasing to a man, it will, before long, begin to be pleasing to him.

3. If we consider the nature of the godly, we shall see this mourning suit with it exceedingly, both in regard of his relation to God, and to man. God is his father, and therefore it can not but grieve him much, to see him offended and dishonored. Love to God, and consequently to his law, and love to men, and desire of their good, are the spring of these *rivers*. A godly man is tender of God's glory and of his law; every stroke that it receives, striketh his heart: and he hath bowels of compassion to men, and would be glad if they were converted and saved. He considers every man as his brother, and therefore is sorrowful to see him run the hazard of perishing in sin. The former sympathy, whereby the godly man tenders the glory of God, is from his piety: this latter, whereby he pities the misery of man, is from his charity. And from these flow the *rivers that run down his eyes*.

To be too sensible of worldly crosses, and prodigal of tears upon such slight occasions, is little better than childish or womanish; but these tears that flow from love to God and grief for sin, have neither uncomeliness nor excess in them. Abundance of them will beseem any man who is a Christian. Let profane men judge it a weakness to weep for sin, yet, we see David do it. Men of arms and valor need not fear disparagement by weeping thus: it is the truest magnanimity, to be sensible of the point of God's honor, which is injured by sin.

Again, the consideration of this truth will discover the world guilty of very much ingratitude to godly men. It hath always been the custom of profane persons, to seek to brand religion and godliness with disloyalty and turbulency, and to make it pass for an enemy to the peace and prosperity of states and kingdoms. You see clearly with what affection religion furnishes men toward the public, causing them to mourn for common sins, and so to prevent, as far as in them lies, common calamities. And this is of no little consequence; for truly, it is not foreign power, so much as sin at home, that ruins kingdoms. All the winds that blow without the earth, be they never so violent, stir it not; only that which is within its own bowels, makes an earthquake. It was a grave answer of Epaminondas, being asked what he was doing solitary and pensive in the time of solemn mirth and feasting: *While my countrymen*, said he, *are so peaceably feasting, I am thinking on the best means to preserve that peace to them that it may continue*. Which, a little altered, is applicable to the godly. They are oftentimes mourning for the sins and praying for the peace, of the places where they live; when in the mean time, the greatest part are multiplying sin, and so forfeiting their peace.

*Rivers of waters*. "This is a mournful, melancholy life that these Precisians lead," says the worldling. Yes, truly, if there were no more in it than what we can perceive and judge of. But besides the full joy laid up for them, and the beginnings of it here, there is even in this mourning an unknown sweetness and delight. The philosopher says even of common tears, that there is some kind of pleasure in them, as some things please the taste by their very tartness. But of these tears, they that know them, know it to be eminently true, that they are pleasant. But be this exercise as sad as the profane call it, yet, why observe they not that they themselves are much the cause of it? As they may read here; *Because they keep not God's law*.

But to pass by divers inferences that the words afford, let us take notice of the duty here practised, and how much we are all obliged to the present practice of it. Who will deny that we have too much matter and occasions of it? Besides the sorrow of Sion, and particularly the bloodshedding and distress of our brethren, and our own danger,



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what corner of the land, what rank or condition of people is there that abounds not in gross and heinous violations of God's law? *They keep not thy law:* magistrates and judges turning judgment into gall and wormwood: ministers remiss in that great care, the care of souls; people wallowing in ungodliness and uncleanness, swearing, and other profaneness; the greater oppressing the less, and the less defrauding and wronging the greater; no sensible and notable work of conversion almost to be seen or heard of among us; the Lord absenting himself from his ordinances. O that he would dwell in his house, and fill it with a cloud of his glory!

What vile uncleanness and wantonness! What shameful drunkenness and excess! And some are so far from mourning for others' guiltiness of this sin, that they glory in making others guilty of it, and count it a pastime to make others drunk. And this is a far greater sin than drunkenness itself; for these men, while they make beasts of their companions, make devils of themselves, becoming tempters and provokers to sin. If any such be here, either tremble at the *wo* that the prophet Habakkuk (chap. ii.) denounceth, or confess that you believe not the scriptures: *Wo to him that gives his neighbor drink, and puts the bottle to him to make him drunken. The cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned to thee:* it is full of heavy vengeance. There is a cup, if you like it, to pay you home the cups you give to others.

Again, how is the land filled with oaths and cursings! How are your streets, and almost all companies where a man can come, defiled, partly with tearing the precious name of God, partly with calling on the devil!

There would be no end of reckoning up all particulars; sabbath-breaking, fraud and covetousness, pride and malice, and envyings one of another, and the rest. But the sum is this, a universal want of the fear of God and his law.

And the cause of this, is, in a great part, ignorance of God and of his law. And truly it is wonderful under so much light and such plentiful preaching, to find so much darkness, not only in the skirts and remote places, but even in the prime parts of this land. Multitudes there are that are strangers to the very principles and fundamentals of that religion which they profess; and they that have knowledge are found abusing it, and sinning against it, continuing in profaneness. And without this true religion, it is as impossible to have renewed hearts and lives, as to have a house without a foundation, or, as we say, a castle in the air. And this atheism and ignorance among people, is in a great part to be imputed to the corruption and sloth of ministers. Would to God there were not many congregations, not altogether destitute, but such as are freezing under a cold and lifeless ministry!

You see, then, we want not causes of mourning and humiliation, on all hands; but our want is inward, of that due disposition for it, *softness of heart*, and that *love to God*, which should melt and mollify the heart. Let us then stir up ourselves and one another, to this godly sorrow for the sins of the land. There is need of *rivers of tears* for these heaps of sin: as they tell of Hercules' letting in a river to that monstrous stable of Augeus, that could not otherwise have been cleansed in the time allotted him.

And truly, as the duty lies upon all the faithful, the ministers of the word ought to be most eminent in it, the chief mourners, the precentors, to take up the tune of these themes. Joel ii. 17. And all that wish the good of church and kingdom, ought to bear a part in them, according to their measure. Have we not much need to entreat reconcilement with God, that he prove not our enemy? Yes, surely, and were we reconciled with him, we should have little need to fear the power of man.

Now, they that would be profitable mourners for others' sins, by all means, must have these two conditions I mentioned; to be careful observers of the law themselves, and to mourn for their own failing and breaking of it. Now, to the observing of the law, it is absolutely needful (1.) To know and understand it, and that not only in the letter and surface, but according to the spiritual sense and meaning of it. For without this knowledge, a man may light upon some duty by guess, as it were in the dark, but observe the law he can not. They are not alone reproveable, who glory in their own sins, and make sport of the sins of others, but they mistake it much, who think it enough to consider their own with grief, and judge the sins of others an impertinency for them to think on. As they mourn not aright for others, who begin not at themselves, so they mourn never aright for themselves, who end in themselves. He who here thus weeps for others, made his bed to swim with those rivers for his own sin. Psalm vi. 6. (2.) As a man must know this law, so he must be inwardly convinced and persuaded of the divinity of it, that it is God's law. (3.) He must have a deep apprehension of the majesty and authority of the Lawgiver, to work reverence, and of his goodness, to beget love; and the due mixture of these two will both strongly command and sweeten obedience to his commandments. And this obedience, though it be not an absolute and perfect fulfilling of any one of the commandments, yet it has a respect to them all, as this Psalm hath it (ver. 6), which is (so to speak) an imperfect kind of perfection. And from this respect to the law, which is the observing of it, will flow that other condition, of grieving when we break it.

And beside all other things that should make a Christian's own sin grievous to him, there is one thing can not but move him much, the consideration of the sorrow and

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sufferings of Christ. To view the bleedings of the Lord Jesus, can not but pierce a believing soul, and make it say, "Did my Redeemer shed his blood for my sins, and shall not I myself shed tears for them?" I know the natural constitution of some denies them tears; but if it do so to any, make up that want with a sense of inward grief, and it is well enough. The eye of God can discern that as well as the other. But truly, where men have tears for lighter causes (for all other causes are lighter), and none for this, they feel not yet the weight of sin; except that want be through the deepness of sorrow, which sometimes will stop the current of tears, though it used to run at other times: as they say, *Curæ leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent.* But this is a rare and a happy impediment.

And to answer another doubt: If you find sometimes worldly griefs stir you more violently, yet, let this godly sorrow affect you more constantly, that it may have the advantage in continuance, if it fall short in the degree.

But as this grief must begin at home, as they say of charity, it must not be so selfish as to rest there. And truly, where it comes in that order, it may be some way a stronger evidence of sincerity to mourn for others' sins than to mourn for our own; for there seems to be more of God in it, because there is less in it of ourselves, and of our own particular interest.

Now you will possibly think it but an unpleasant duty that you have heard urged all this while: but look forward, and consider the issue of it. That which Christ speaks in particular to his disciples, is generally true of all Christians: *Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned* (or made) *into joy.* John xvi. 20. The water of those tears shall be turned into wine of consolation. The traffic of these *rivers* is gainful; they export grief, and import joy. When these tears are called *seed*, the harvest-crop is called *joy.* Psalm cxxvi. 5. *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.* They are here called *rivers*, and they are answered with a river, for which they shall in the end be perfectly exchanged. Psalm lxxxvi. 8: *Thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures.* And Rev. vii. 17: *The Lamb shall feed them and lead them unto living fountains of waters.* Here they run down the eyes, and water the cheeks, and there you read that God shall wipe them away from their eyes. Who would not be content to weep, to have God wipe away their tears with his own hand? Be ambitious, then, to be found among the mourners in Sion; and when ye remove from this valley of tears, God shall at once fully wipe away all the stain of sin from your souls, and all tears for it from your eyes. And as he shall wipe away the tears with the one hand, he will set the crown upon your heads with the other.

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## SERMON VIII.

### THE NAME OF JESUS FRAGRANT.

Preached after the administration of the Lord's Supper.

Blessed *are they that dwell in thy house,* saith the psalmist; and he adds this reason, *They will be still praising thee.* There is indeed always in God's house, both fit opportunity and plentiful matter of his praises. But the greater number of those who frequent his house, do not *dwell* in it; their delight and affection is not there. Therefore they can not praise him; they come in as strangers, and have no skill in the songs of praise. Yea, and the very children of the family, who worship in spirit and in truth, find their instruments (their hearts) very often quite out of tune for praises, and sometimes most of all when praises are requisite. They find still such abundant cause of complaint in themselves, weighing down their spirits, that they can hardly at all wind them up to magnify that God whose mercy is far more abundant. If we would take a reflex view, and look back upon our carriage this day in the presence of our God, who is there among us who would not find much work for sad thoughts? Would not one find that he had a hard and stony heart, another a light, inconstant, wandering heart to complain of, a third an unbelieving heart, and some all of these? And they (if such there be) who have both deeply sorrowed and been largely comforted, will possibly, for all that, upon former sad experience, be full of fears and jealousies that this sweet temper will not be of long continuance; that before long, the world, or some lust, will find or make a way to creep in, and banish those heavenly thoughts, and trouble that peace and joy which accompanies them. Yet notwithstanding all these causes of grief or fear, our causes of praise are both more and greater. And it is no reason that the sense of our own evil should prejudge that acknowledgment of God's goodness; yea, rather it should stir us up to extol it so much the more. Cease not to bemoan the evils of your own hearts; but withal forget not to magnify the riches of his grace, who hath given himself for you, and to you. These two will not hinder one another, but the due intermixture of them will make a very good harmony. And the fruit of them will be this, you shall have still more cause to praise, and less to complain. When the Lord shall find you humble acknowledgers of his grace, he will delight to bestow more grace upon you, and will subdue those iniquities for you, which you can not. And though he is pleased to do it but gradually, by little and little, yet, in the end,

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the conquest shall be full: and then, he who is the *author and the finisher of your faith*, though it is his own work, yet, because it is done in you, he shall account the victory yours, as obtained by you, and give you, as conquerors, the crown of glory. *To him that overcometh*, saith he, *will I give to sit with me in my throne.* Rev. iii. 21.

There is nothing here, but from free grace. The courage and strength to fight in this spiritual warfare, the victory by fighting, and the crown by victory, flow all from that fountain. *In all these things we are more than conquerors*, saith the apostle—but how?—*through him that loved us.* Therefore, if we desire to be such, let us humble ourselves before the throne of grace, entreating both for grace and glory in the name of Christ our Mediator.

### Cant. i. 3.

**Because of the savor of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.**

The natural workings and desires of things are agreeable to their being. The beasts, according to their sensitive life, seek those things that tend to the good and preservation of that life, and affect nothing higher than those, and they are satisfied. Man (except such men as are in the lowest stage, and border upon the beasts) finds nature, even corrupt nature, raising him to higher desires and designs. And yet, of the best of them, the apostle's maxim holds true, *They that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh;* and yet, he subjoins the excellency of some men beyond the best naturalist, *They that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.* Rom. viii. 5. They can not be confined to things natural, but are strongly moved toward spiritual blessings, and toward Christ the sum of them. And having once tasted of his sweetness, they can say, *Because of the savor of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth.*

They that are elevated to a supernatural being can admit nothing into competition with his love: and this it is that lies under these words, *Because of the savor of thy good ointments*, &c.

Numbers have promiscuously been his guests at this time, and the greatest number think they came to good purpose. But know, that you are so far from partaking of Christ in the sacrament, that you have not so much as smelt his perfumes, if you be not strongly taken with his love. Great are the praises, and many the duties you owe him for so rich favors; and therefore, show your good will, and endeavor some payment. But know, that none of them are current, except they be stamped with *love*. If you love not, you do nothing; all your labors and services without it, are as so many ciphers, they amount to just nothing. And with it, the meanest of them will find acceptance.

You have briefly in the words, *Christ's loveliness* and *the Christian's love*, the former the cause of the latter; both couched under borrowed terms, according to the whole strain of this allegorical song, on which the true experimental knowledge of this Divine love is the best commentary.

In all love, three things are necessary: (1.) Some goodness in the object, either true and real, or apparent and seeming to be so; for the soul, be it never so evil, can affect nothing but what it takes some way to be good. (2.) There must be a knowledge of that goodness: for the most excellent things, if altogether unknown, affect not. (3.) There must be a suitableness or agreement of that good thing with the nature of those who should affect it; otherwise, indeed, how good soever it is, it is not good to them.

Now all these we have clearly in this love. I. The goodness, the excellency of Christ expressed by *precious ointments*. II. The manifestation and making of it known, signified by *the pouring forth of his name*. III. His fitness and congruity with them who are here mentioned under this denomination, *virgins;* such as have the senses of their souls not stopped with the pollutions of the world, but pure and active, and therefore, as the apostle speaks, Heb. v. 14, *exercised to discern good and evil.* These three requisites, thus happily met, must needs produce love: *Therefore the virgins love thee.*

I. The excellency of the object: *Because of the savor of thy good ointments.* How true is the apostle's word, when he calls Christ the believer's *All things!* And that radical grace of faith, because it apprehends Christ, hath a kind of universality; and it is reasonable, too, it alone being to the soul what all the five senses are to the body. It is the eye, and the mouth; a wonderful eye, it *sees him who is invisible*, Heb. xi. 27; the mouth, it *tastes that the Lord is gracious*, 1 Peter ii. 3. Yea, take these two both together in one place. Psalm xxxiv. 8: *O! taste and see that the Lord is good.* It is the soul's ear; for what else is meant, when it is said, *He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear?* And was it not that *touch* which Christ took special notice of, and with good reason distinguished it from the common touch of the multitude that was crowding about him? That *touch* alone draws virtue from him: *Some one hath touched me, for there is virtue gone out of me.* And lastly, as it is all those other senses, and Christ is its object in reference to them all, so here, in its *smelling*, it finds the savor of his fragrant graces, and by that works love: *Because of the savor of thy precious ointments.*

What strange odds is there between the opinion of Christ's spouse, and that of the world who know him not! They wonder what she sees in him desirable; she wonders that they are not all ravished with his excellencies. They prefer the basest vanities in

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the world before him: she finds the choicest and richest things in the world too mean to resemble the smallest part of his worth. See in this *Song*, how busily and skilfully she goes to all the creatures, and crops the rarest pieces in nature and art to set forth her well-beloved, and seems to find them all too poor for her purpose. One while she extols him above all things beautiful and pleasant to the eye; another while, above things delectable to the taste, as in the former verse, *Thy loves are better than wine;* and here she prefers the perfume of his graces to the most precious ointments.

When a natural eye looks upon the sacrament, to wit, of the Lord's supper, it finds it a bare and mean kind of ceremony. Take heed there be not many of you that come to it, and partake of it with others, who prize it little, have but low conceits of it, and do indeed find as little in it as you look for. But oh, what precious consolation and grace doth a believer meet with at this banquet! How richly is the table furnished to his eye! What plentiful varieties employ his hand and taste, what abundance of rare dainties! Yet, there is nothing but One here; but that One is all things to the believing soul. It finds *his* love is sweeter than the richest wine to the taste, or best odors to the smell; and that delightful word of his, *Thy sins are forgiven thee*, is the only music to a distressed conscience.

*Thy good ointments.* The holy ointment of the sanctuary, under the law, was composed according to God's own prescription. See Exod. xxx. 25. And they were straightly forbid to imitate it, or make any like it, to signify the singular holiness, the matchless worth of the anointing *oil of gladness*, wherewith our high priest, the Lord Jesus was *anointed above his fellows*. And in this he is incomparable, that his ointment he hath not from without. It was his own Divine nature that perfumed his manhood with these precious ointments. God and the Spirit of the Lord are said to have anointed him. Psalm xlv. 7: *Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.* And Isa. lxi. 1: *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek.* But know, that that Spirit and the Father are one in essence with the eternal Son. In that mystical song much like to this, the xlvth Psalm, it is said (ver. 8) his *garments smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia* [as he comes forth] *out of* [his] *ivory palaces.* When he came down from his glorious court above, to dwell among men, he apparelled himself like them: he was clothed with human flesh. But yet, that vesture was so transcendently enriched with all graces, as with costly perfumes, that men might easily know there was more under them than a mere man Yea, even in that low estate, did such beams of his glory shine through, that all whose eyes were open did clearly behold them, and know him to be no less than the the only begotten Son of God, by this, that he was so *full of grace and truth.* John i. 14. And these are, in a word, the precious ointments whose delightful smell is here commended.

Now, to enumerate and describe these graces, what tongue of men, yea, or of angels, were sufficient? What other is the main subject of the whole Scriptures? What mean all the figures and ceremonies of the law, the costly furniture and ornaments of the temple, the right vestments of the High Priest, that fine linen, that silk and gold, those gems and precious stones? Was any one of them, were they all any other than shadows and dim resemblances of the matchless perfections of Jesus Christ? It is strange that Christians have so low conceits of their high Redeemer! What is the gospel, but a more clear and plentiful pouring forth of those ointments? What was the great labor and business of the holy apostles, but the diffusing of Christ's graces through the world? *I determined to know nothing among you, save Christ, and him crucified*, says St. Paul to his Corinthians. What are that other sacrament and this, but coverts under which Christ conveys himself and his graces to the believing soul, while the profane and slight-hearted receivers are sent away with empty elements? Thus you see how ample a subject these graces are in the general. And truly, the consideration of any one particular of them might be the employment of many hours. Would you hear of the *wisdom of* Christ? Look what the apostle says of it, Col. ii. 3: *In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* Not some drops of wisdom, no, nor streams, but a fountain. Not one treasure, but treasures, many treasures, yea, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; yet, not obvious to every eye, but, as treasures are, *hid.* The children of wisdom, who are the world's fools, have some knowledge of this his wisdom, and draw from it for their own use, but to sound the depth of it, who can be able!

No less admirable is his *holiness.* He is both the immaculate Lamb, and the undefiled Sacrifice. *Such a high priest became us.* Heb. vii. 26. Became *us!* Yes, *holy, harmless and undefiled:* the more we were defiled with sin, the more stood we in need of an undefiled and spotless High Priest. It was as expedient that he should be unlike us in that, as that he should be like us in all other things. Therefore, as for the legal priesthood there was a holy consecrating oil, so this immortal High Priest was anointed with most entire and complete holiness. And this perfect holiness of his, is set forth as *myrrh*, the best ointments and spices—*myrrh* which is of a virtue preservative from corruption. He was not only of excellent smell, while he lived among men, but this myrrh did like-

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wise preserve and exempt him from contracting any corruption or pollution, by the bad air of sinful company; so that he conversed with sinners, that he might convert them, without any danger of infection.

And as he was thus extraordinarily anointed with the spirit of wisdom and holiness, so likewise with the spirit of *meekness;* therefore he is called *The Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world.* His *voice was not heard in the streets.* Matt. xii. 19. And take in that other grace which he himself mentions together with his meekness, as being near in nature to it, *humility: Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.* Matt. xi. 29. Indeed, humility is an odoriferous grace: it is a *gracing* grace, it adds a kind of sweetness and lustre to all other graces; yea, it serves singularly as a character for the trial of the truth of all other graces. As balsam, which is the chief of precious ointments, used to be tried; that is the truest and best, which, put into any liquor, goes to the bottom; that but slight, which swims above; so those graces are most upright, that are accompanied with most humility. And that this may be out of doubt, you know that Jesus Christ (of whom we now speak), as he had most grace, so was he most exemplary in humility. And certainly, the sweet smell of this *good ointment* did *fill the whole house,* when he washed his disciples' feet; as is said of the ointment that Mary poured upon his feet, in the foregoing chapter. John xii. 3.

Among many other of his gracious qualities that might be mentioned, there is one we can not but take particular notice of, his *love;* the rather, because the fragrant smell of his graces is here said to beget love. Now you know that one of the strongest attractives of *love,* is *love.* Ἔρως ἔρωτα τίκτει: *Magnes amoris amor.* What made him empty himself of his glory, as the apostle speaks, but because he was full of love? What made him take on the form of a servant, suffer heat, and cold, and hunger, and poverty, but love? What other was it made him digest the persecutions, revilings, and the contradiction of sinners, but love? But the great wonder of his love is this, he *died* to become our life. *Who hath loved me, and given himself for me,* says the great apostle St. Paul. Gal. ii. 20. And, *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us,* says the beloved apostle St. John. 1 John iii. 16. Was it the nails that held him fast to the cross, when they tauntingly bade him come down? No; it was his *love,* that was stronger than death. But all this was nothing to the angry countenance of his Father, nor would he ever have ventured upon that, if infinite love had not persuaded him. No wonder if the apostle call it a love that passeth knowledge. *That you may know,* saith he, *the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.* Eph. iii. 19. Know it we may, and should, but we must know withal, that we can not know it fully. And this is our comfort, that it is greater than we can comprehend; for if it were not so, it would be less than we stand in need of. So much of his love we may understand, as may abundantly inflame our hearts with love to him. For this purpose hath he revealed it, and made his *name like an ointment poured out.* And that is the second thing.

II. *His name.* That is, the report and manifestation of his excellencies. And if you will take it properly of his name, *Jesus,* and *Christ,* or the *Messiah,* it is true of them, for they are significative of these excellencies. Ask an afflicted conscience, if *Jesus,* that is, *a Savior,* be not a precious word that hath a sovereign value, both a refreshing smell and a healing virtue. The hammer of the law may break a stony heart in pieces, but it is only the blood of Jesus that can soften it. And where it is effectually poured, either upon a wounded soul, it heals it, or upon a hard heart, it mollifies it. For that other name, *Christ,* well may it be called *an ointment poured out,* for it signifies his *anointing.* And that the sweet savor of this name may affect, read but that one passage, Isa. lxi. 1. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek,* &c. What inestimable riches of consolation are there in each of those effects to which Christ was anointed! And yet, we find not a word among them all for a proud, stiff-necked sinner. Here are *good tidings,* but it is to *the meek;* comfortable *binding up,* but it is for the *broken-hearted; liberty,* but it is for *captives* and *prisoners* groaning under their chains, and desirous to be delivered; not for such as delight in their bondage. There is *oil of joy* and *garments of praise,* but they are provided for *mourning, dejected spirits* that need them; not for the impenitent. On the contrary, there is a terrible word interjected in the midst of these promises. *The day of vengeance of our God;* and that is the portion of Christ's enemies, and such are all incorrigible sinners.

Thus it is, at the same banquet from which you come, one may be filled with spiritual joy, and the very person that sits next may be filled with a secret curse, and return more miserable than he came. But let the disconsolate, lamenting sinner lift up his head, and behold Christ, the Son of God, anointed a *prophet* to preach salvation and liberty to such, a *priest* to purchase it, and a *king,* to give it.

Now, the *pouring out* of his name is divers. Before the coming of the Messiah, his name was poured out in prophecies and promises, in types and legal ceremonies; but more fully when the *Word was made flesh.* Then angels, and holy men, yea, and women, spake clearly of him. What was his Father's voice at his baptism, the Holy Ghost's descending what was his own preaching, and miracles,

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and conversation. out all the pouring forth of his precious name? And in his sufferings and death, what think you? Was not his name then poured forth, yea, his blood with it? Yes, truly: being extended on the cross, and his body pierced in divers places, his precious ointments were shed abroad toward all the quarters of the world: their smell reached both heaven and the visible earth. God the Father, as he was said to do in Noah's sacrifice, did much more smell in his sacrifice, a savor of rest, appeasing his wrath; and all believers a savor of peace, a quieting of their consciences. And as aromatic spices, when they are pounded out and beaten, send forth their sweet smells most liberally, so, in these his sufferings, did the *obedience*, *patience*, and *love*, and all the *graces*, and the *name* of our Savior, most clearly manifest themselves to the world. After he was dead, they embalmed his body, but they knew not that his own virtue would do more than all the ointments and spices in the world could do, not only by preserving his body from corruption, but by raising it the third day. And truly, after his resurrection, his own disciples knew his name better than ever before; and yet more fully after his ascension, when the Holy Ghost came down upon them; which was poured from heaven on them for this very end; that they might pour forth Christ's name to the ends of the earth. Acts ii. 8. And they did so carrying this precious *treasure in earthern vessels*, as that elect vessel St. Paul speaks, 1 Cor. iv. 7. And ever since, God hath continued the pouring forth of his name, by the ministry and preaching of the gospel. It is true, there are too many of those that are employed in this work, who seek themselves, and their own ends, rather than his glory whom they preach. And they that are more upright, the very best of them are sinful men. But how mean and unworthy soever they be, despise not the gospel. Let the sweet name which they pour forth, prevail for itself, that so you may reverence and love it, if you would have *salvation* by it; and *there is no other name under heaven*, by which *that* can be obtained.

As this name is poured forth in the *gospel preached*, so, in the *sacraments* annexed to it; and particularly in this, when the bread is broken, and the wine poured out. And was not this the earnest desire of the receivers of it this day—it should have been—to have our share in it, for the refreshment and curing of our souls? Nor shall any that came thus, be disappointed. And if not immediately, yet, most certainly, and that in due time, they shall find the sweet fruits of it.

You have heard many ways how the name of Christ is poured out, yet there is one more, without which all the rest are ineffectual: it is this, the secret and powerful working of the Spirit of God in the soul. The ordinances and means of salvation do indeed pour forth the name of Christ round about a man, but till the Spirit concur with them, not one drop falls within the soul. And is he not so much the more miserable, who hears much of Christ, and partakes nothing of him? Yes, surely. A man may have much common knowledge of Christ, and may understand well, yea, may preach well, concerning his worth and graces, and yet not *love* him. But there is a particular knowledge of him by the infusion of the Spirit, and where the smallest measure of this is, it presently wins the affection. There is *a shedding abroad of the love of God in our hearts*, that the apostles speaks of, Rom. v. 5; and this draws us after him; for our love to God is nothing else but the reflection of his love to us. So then, though many hear of Christ, yet, because there are but few that have this special knowledge of him, therefore it is, that so few do truly esteem him and love him; and they are such as are here called Virgins: and that is the third thing.

III. The correspondence in the character of those who love Christ: *The virgins.* Similitude and conformity of nature beget friendship: pure affections delight in a pure object, and it makes them such. For the truth is, Christ doth not find men naturally suitable to himself, but as he took on our nature, so he washeth away the sinfulness of our nature, which he took not on, and makes us that way conformable to his nature. And they who are so changed, though they were formerly lovers of sin, yet, by conversion, which is called regeneration, they are born again, and so become not only chaste, but even *virgins*, spiritually. For by *virgins*, here, are not meant such as Romish votaries fancy them to be: no, this virginity may well consist with any lawful state of life.

These virgins are such as be truly holy and pure in heart and life, who, though they are not perfectly free from all sin, yet have affection to no sin. These are singularly delighted with the smell of Christ's name and graces, while the voluptuous person, and the profane worldling, dislike and despise it! *Balsama sic suibus, sic male nardus olent.* The virgins, they bestow their affection whole and entire upon Christ.

How grossly do you delude yourselves, who make your hearts dens of pride, filthy lust, malice and envy, and thousands of vanities, and yet think to find a corner in them to lodge Christ too! Truly, you would both straiten him in room, and give him very bad neighbors. No: they that think not a whole heart too little for him, shall never enjoy him.

*The virgins love thee.*] Grace destroys not the natural passions of the soul, but corrects them only, by destroying their corruption, and so they become not merely not contrary to grace, but are made the subject and seat of grace. This of love, which is the chief of them, we see, it abolisheth not, but rectifies it, recalling it to its due object, and turning it into the right channel, by which it may empty itself into the ocean of goodness.

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And this love may well consist with the purity of virgins; yea, it is this love that purifies and makes them such. *The virgins love*—But whom? *Thee.* And it is as reasonable a love as it is pure; *Therefore they love thee*, because thou hast made them in some measure apprehensive of thy worth, which commands the love of all that know it: not a cold and indifferent affection, but a superlative, ardent love, far overtopping all their other desires. And with good reason, since Christ doth infinitely, and beyond all comparison, surpass all other things desirable. Ask your own hearts, if you love Christ thus: for if not thus, you love him not at all. The Apostle St. Paul's love was of this size. Phil. iii. 7, 8. *But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ.* This love will not only undergo difficulties and sufferings for Christ without either repining or fainting, but it will even be glad to meet with them, as opportunity is, to exercise and testify itself. Hard things will seem most easy for his sake, and bitter things exceeding sweet. In a word, to him that loves, scarce anything is impossible. Love is the leading passion of the soul: all the rest conform themselves to it, *desire*, and *hope*, and *fear*, and *joy*, and *sorrow*.

If, then, you love Christ, the desires and breathings of your soul after him are strong and earnest. If he withdraw himself, or appear angry, if either you see him not, or see him look discontented, your grief will be so deep that it can not be allayed by any worldly employment. Yet, upon some former tokens of his love, which is known to be unchangeable, hope will uphold the soul, till the beams of his grace scatter the cloud, and break through. Though our *Joseph* seem strange, and speak roughly for awhile, he can not long refrain discovering his affection.

Again, love you him, unspeakable will be your joy when he smiles upon you. As great will be your delight in possession, as your desire is in pursuit; and while you have his presence, it will be too hard a task for any affliction to dismay you. Have you indeed heard Christ speak comfortably to you this day at his holy table? How will this enable the soul, and arm it against dangers, and distracting, distrustful fears! *Perfect love casteth out fear*, saith St. John: 1 John iv. 18: that is, all base and servile fear: but there is one fear that is in no heart but where love begets it, fear to offend. You know how wary and loath men are naturally to displease those they love; therefore it is, that love to Christ, and a careful observing of his commandments, are inseparable companions. Yea, love itself is the *fulfilling of the law*, for it gives up the heart to God, and consequently the whole man. Then there is no return of duty which your receiving of Christ calls for (and what doth it not call for)? there is none, I say, but is comprised under this one of *love*. Do you owe him praises? Yes, surely. Then *love him;* that will stir you up to praise him. You never knew, but where much love was in the heart, it made the tongue ready and active upon all occasions to praise the party loved. Love will entertain small courtesies with great thanks; much more where the benefit so far exceeds all possible thankfulness. Ought you to serve and obey him? Doubtless: he hath for that purpose redeemed you with his precious blood. And truly there is no obedience or service so full and so cheerful, as that which flows from love. Should you study conformity to Christ, and labor to be like him? Yes, for this is to walk worthy of Christ. Then there is nothing assimilates to much as love. Men delight in their society whom they love, and by their society they do insensibly contract their customs, and become like them. These Virgins who love Christ for his graces, they love to converse with him, and by conversing with him, they receive of his graces, and have a smell of his perfumes. Not only do they, by the smell of his garments, or such imposed rites, obtain the blessing, but they likewise smell like him by the participation of sanctifying grace, of his wisdom and holiness, in a pure and godly conversation, abstaining from the impure lusts and pollutions of the world; so likewise of his meekness and humility. Never think that one and the same soul can have much pride and much of Christ. Ever, the more grace a man hath, the more sense hath he likewise of his own unworthiness, and God's free mercy, and consequently the more humility.

If you love Christ, you can not choose but be like him in love to your brethren. This is expressly compared by the psalmist to the *precious ointment poured upon Aaron's head, that ran down to the very skirts of his garments.* Psal. cxxxiii. 2. Our Head and High Priest, the Lord Jesus, hath incomparably testified his love to believers, whom he is pleased to call his *brethren*. They are far from equalling him, either in love to him, or in love one to another, but they do imitate him in both. This is his great commandment, *that we love one another, even as he loved us*, which is expressed both as a strong motive and a high example. It is not possible that a spirit of malice and implacable hatred can consist with the love of Christ.

Finally, Should you be ready to suffer for Christ? Yes. Then love is that which will enable you; and if you were inflamed with this fire then, though burned for him, that fire would only consume your dross, and be soon extinguished; but this would endure for ever.

By these and the like evidences, try whether you indeed love the Lord Jesus Christ. And by these fruits, you who profess to love

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him, testify the sincerity of your love; and be assured, that if you be now found among these virgins that love him, you shall one day be of the number of those virgins that are spoken of, Rev. xiv. 3, 4, who sing a new song before the throne of God.

If you hate the defilements of the world, and be not polluted with inordinate affection to the creature, it shall never repent you to have made choice of Christ. He shall fill your hearts with peace and joy in believing. When you come to his house and table, he shall send you home with joy and sweet consolation, such as you would not exchange for crowns and sceptres. And after some few of these running banquets here below, you shall enter into the great marriage-supper of the Lamb, where faith shall end in sight, and hope in possession, and love continue in perpetual and full enjoyment; where you shall be never weary, but for ever happy in beholding the face of the Blessed Trinity: to whom be glory. Amen.

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## SERMON IX.

### THE SINNER A REBEL AGAINST GOD.

How true is that word of our Savior, who is truth itself, *Without me, ye can do nothing:*—severed from me, as that branch that is not in me. They who are altogether out of Christ, in spiritual exercises do nothing at all. 'Tis true, they may pray and hear the word, yea, and preach it too, and yet in so doing they do nothing, nothing in effect. They have the matter of good actions, but it is the internal form gives being to things. They are but a number of empty words and a dead service to a living God. For all our outward performances and worship of the body are nothing but the body of worship, and therefore nothing but a carcass, except the Lord Jesus by his Spirit, breathe upon it the breath of life. Yea, the worshipper himself is spiritually dead till he receive life from Jesus, and be quickened by his Spirit. If this be true, then it will follow necessarily, that where numbers are met together (as here), pretending to serve and worship God, yet he hath very few that do so indeed, the greatest part being out of Christ; and such being without him, they can do nothing in his service.

### Romans viii. 7.

**Because the carna' mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.**

The ordinary workings and actions of creatures are suitable to their nature, as the ascending of light things, and the moving of heavy things downward; so, the vital and sensitive actions of things that have life and sense. The reasonable creature, it is true, hath more liberty in its actions, freely choosing one thing and rejecting another; yet it can not be denied, that in the acting of that liberty, their choice and refusal follow the sway of their nature and condition. As the angels and glorified souls, their nature being perfectly holy, and unalterably such, they can not sin, they can delight in nothing but in obeying and praising that God, in the enjoyment of whom their happiness consisteth, still ravished in beholding his face. The saints, again, that have not yet reached that home, and are but on their journey, they are not fully defecated and refined from the dross of sin: there are in them two parties, *natural corruption*, and *supernatural grace;* and these keep a struggling within them. But the younger shall supplant the elder: grace shall in the end overcome; and in the meanwhile, though it be not free from mixture, yet it is predominant. The main bent of a renewed man, is, obedience and holiness, and any action of that kind he rejoices in; but the sin that escapes him, he can not look upon but with regret and discontent. But alas! they that be so minded, are very thin sown in the world. Even in God's peculiar fields, where the laborage of the gospel is, and the outward profession of true religion unanimously received, yet, the number of true converts, spiritual-minded persons, is very small; the greatest part acting sin with delight, and taking pleasure in unrighteousness, living in disobedience to God, as in their proper element; and the reason is, the contrariety of their nature to our holy Lord. *The carnal mind is enmity against God.*

*The mind*, φρονημα. Some render it the *prudence* or *wisdom* of the flesh. Here you have it *the carnal mind*. But the word signifies, indeed, an act of the mind, rather than either the faculty itself, or the habit of prudence in it, so as it discovers what is the frame of both these, the *minding;* as it is used, ver. 5, conformably to that of Moses, Gen. vi., *Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually.* The word indeed signifies the *wise thoughts*. So then, take the full latitude of it thus: *The carnal mind*, in its best and wisest thoughts, is direct *enmity against God.*

*Carnal* [της σαρκος.] What is meant by the *flesh* here? It is the whole *corrupt nature* of man; and *that* we may know by its opposition to the *Spirit:* not to the spirit or soul of a man, for so it hath no *thoughts* nor *minding*, these being proper to the soul, but opposed to the Spirit of God.

Now, the corruption of nature is called the *flesh*, not without very good reason, not only to signify the baseness of it, the flesh being the more ignoble and meaner part of a man, but because the greatest part of the sins of men's lives, are about sensitive objects and things that concern the flesh or the body. It



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lets in temptation of sin to the soul by the doors of the senses, and it gives the last perfection or accomplishment to sin, by the external acting of it. The very first sin, that brought in death and misery with it upon mankind, the pleasures of the *eye* and of the *taste*, were sharers in the guiltiness of it.

*The carnal mind.*] Man in regard of his composition, is, as it were, the tie and band of heaven and earth: they meet and are married in him. A body he has taken out of the dust, but a soul is breathed into him from heaven, from the *Father of Spirits:* a house of clay, but a guest of most noble extraction. But the pity is, it hath forgot its original, and is so drowned in flesh, that it deserves no other than to go under the name of flesh. It is become the slave and drudge of the body, and like the Israelites in Egypt, made perpetually to moil in clay. What is all your merchandise, your trades and manufactures, your tillage and husbandry, but all for the body, in its behalf, for food and raiment? In all these, the mind must be careful and thoughtful, and yet properly they reach it not, for itself hath no interest in them. It is true, the necessity of the body requires much of these things, and superfluous custom far more; but it is lamentable that men force their soul to forget itself and its proper business, to attend to these things only, and be busy in them. They spend all their time, and their choicest pains, upon perishing things, and which is worse, engage their affections to them. They *mind earthly things, whose end is destruction.* Phil. iii. 18:—the same word is here, φρονημα της σαρκος.

Will you consider seriously, that your souls run the hazard of perishing, because you consider not their spiritual nature? When that earthly tabernacle of yours shall fall to the ground (and ere long it must), your souls must then enter eternity, and though you had as large a share of earthly things as your earthly hearts now would wish, they will all lose their use in that moment. They are not a proper good for the soul at any time, and least at that time. If you keep it, all your life long, busy about the interest and benefit of the flesh, the body, how poor will it be when they part, having provided nothing at all for itself, but the guiltiness of a sinful life, which will sink it into that bottomless pit! Be forewarned then: *For to be carnally minded is death.* Ver. 6, preceding the text.

*The carnal mind.* Now, as sin hath debased and degenerated the soul of man, making it carnal, so, the Son of God, by taking on our nature, hath sublimated it again, and made it spiritual. The souls that receive him are spiritualized; yea, as sin made the soul carnal, grace makes the very body to become spiritual, making it partaker and coworker in spiritual things together with the soul, in doing and suffering, and participant of the hopes, too, of an everlasting reward. This is the main Christian character our apostle gives here, that they are *spiritually minded*, and that their actions suit their minds: *They walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* Whereas before, with the rest of the world, they were eager in the pursuit of honors, and profits, and worldly pleasures, the new stream of their desires runs in another channel. They seek after honor, and are very ambitious of it; but it is such honor the apostle speaks of in this epistle, chap. ii. 7. *By patient continuance in well doing they seek for glory, and honor, and immortality.* Their mind is upon profit and gain; but it is with the same apostle, Phil. iii. 8, that they *may win Christ*, and they account all other things *loss* in comparison. And their desires are after pleasure too, but not *carnal pleasures;* these are both base, and of short continuance, but the pleasures they aim at, are those that are *at God's right hand, and for evermore*, Psalm xvi. 11; and that *path of life* which the psalmist there speaks of, that way of holiness which leads thither, is their delight. Spiritual exercises they go to, not as their task only, but more as their joy and refreshment. And this change the Spirit of God works in the soul, making it, yea, and the body wherein it dwells, of carnal, to become spiritual: as fire, to which the Holy Ghost is compared, refines sand and ashes, and makes of them the purest glass, which is so neat and transparent.

*Enmity against God.*] Sin hath not only made us unlike God, by defacing his beautiful image in us, not only strangers, by making us wander far off from him, but *enemies;* nor enemies only, but *enmity* in the abstract; for that is emphatical, *The carnal mind is enmity*, nothing else but enmity.

Now, this enmity is described in the latter clause of the text, by an antipathy, so to call it, or non-compliance with the law of God: *It is not subject to the law of God, neither can it be*, to wit, while it remains such. There is an absolute impossibity in it, to suit with the law of God, and consequently with God himself. The reason lies in their opposite qualities. God is *spiritual* and *holy*, and so is the law, as our apostle hath it in the preceding chapter; and the opposition he there makes between his unregenerate part and the law, is wholly true of the unregenerate man. *The law is holy*, says he, ver. 12 and 14, *The law is spiritual:* to which too he opposes, *But I am carnal, sold under sin.*

Where are now those who so vilify grace and magnify nature? Or, shall I rather say, nullify grace and deify nature? Here is the best eulogy the apostle will bestow upon the best of natures, *Enmity against God.* Nay, all the sparkles of virtue and moral goodness in civil men and ancient heathens are no better; beside many other things to be said of the virtues of those philosophers, as ignorance of Christ, by whom alone this enmity is removed.

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I should easily confess, nor, I think, can any deny it, that there is, in the very ruins of our nature, some character left of a tendency to God as our chief and only satisfying good, which we may call a kind of love, and when we hear him spoken of, we find it flutter and stir; and hence men so abhor the imputation of hating God and being his enemies. Yet his is so smothered under sensuality and flesh, that until we be made spiritual, nothing appears but practical and (as they call it) interpretative enmity.

There is one thing which stains them enough; they were all, as that Father speaks, *animalia gloriæ:* they aimed not, in their study of virtue, at God's glory, but at their own; and is not that quarrel enough, and matter of enmity? Says not he, *My glory I will not give unto another?*

But that is most useful to you, to convince you of that too good conceit which men have of their natural condition. You would take it hardly, the most profane of you all, if any should come to you in particular, and tell you, you are an enemy to God; but I answer, there is none of you, if you believe the Scriptures, but will confess that all men are naturally such, and therefore, except we find in ourselves a notable alteration from the condition of nature, we must take with it, that we are enemies, yea, *enmity* to God. Of strangers, to become acquainted with him, yea, which is more, of enemies to become friends, is a greater and more remarkable change, than to be incident to a man without any evidence and sign of it. I know there is very great variety in the way and manner of conversion; and to some, especially if it be in their tender years, grace may be instilled and dropped in, as it were, insensibly. But this I may confidently say, that whatsoever be the way of working it, there will be a wide and apparent difference between friendship with God, and the condition of nature, which is enmity against him. Do not flatter yourselves. So long as your minds remain carnal, ardent in love to the world, and cold in love to God, *lovers of pleasures more than of God* (as the apostle speaks), you are his enemies, for with him there is no neutrality. That which they say, taxing it as a weakness in the sex, *Aut amat, aut odit, nihil est tertium*, is in this case necessarily true of all. And this is God's prerogative, that he can judge infallibly of the inside. Those shadows of friendship men use one with another, will not pass with him. Deceived he can not be, but men may easily; and, alas! too many do deceive themselves in this matter, to their own ruin.

We may learn hence, how deep sin goes into our nature, and consequently, that the cure and remedy of it must go as deep; that all the parts of our bodies and all the powers of our souls are polluted originally, our very *mind* and *conscience*, as the apostle speaks, for it is immersed in flesh, and enslaved to flesh naturally, and therefore it goes under its name. We are become all *flesh;* that is the spring of our mischiefs. We have lost our likeness to our Father, the Father of Spirits, the purest and most spiritual Spirit, till renewed by participation of his Spirit in our flesh.

And it is the error, not only of natural men, but somewhat of the godly too, that in self-reformation they set themselves against actual sin, but they lay not the axe to the root of the tree, this root of bitterness, this our inbred and natural *enmity* against God; and till this be done, the lopping off of some branches will do no good; while the root is in vigor, those will grow again, and possibly faster than before. Bewail every known act of sin, as much as you can, for the least of them deserves it; but withal, let the consideration of them lead you into thoughts of this seed of rebellion, the wickedness of our nature, that takes life with us in the womb, and springs and grows up with us, and this will humble us exceedingly, and raise our godly sorrow to a higher tide. We find David taketh this course in the fifty-first Psalm; where he is lamenting his particular sin of adultery and murder, it leads him to the sinfulness of his nature, *I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me* [or, warm me]; which he mentions, not to extenuate and diminish his sin; no, he is there very far from that strain, but adds it as a main aggravation. Indeed the power of original sin in the regenerate is laid very low, yet is it not altogether extinct, which they find often to their grief, and this makes them cry out with our apostle, in the former chapter, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!* The converted are already delivered (as he there adds) from the dominion of it, but not from the molestation and trouble of it. Though it is not a quiet and uncontrolled master, as it was before, yet it is in the house still, as an unruly servant or slave, ever vexing and annoying them; and this *body of death* they shall have still cause to bewail, till death release them. This leprosy hath taken so deep root in the walls of this house, that it can not perfectly be cleansed till it be taken down; and it is this, more than any other sorrows or afflictions of life, that makes the godly man not only content to die, but desirous, longing, with our apostle, *to be dissolved, and be with Christ, which is far better.*

As this teaches us the misery of man's nature, so it sets off and commends exceedingly the riches of God's grace. Are men naturally his enemies? Why then admire, first, his *patience* and *bounty* a little, and then we will speak of his *saving grace.* Could not he very easily ease himself of his adversaries, as he says by the prophet? Isa. i. 24. Wants he power in his right hand to find out and cut off all his enemies? Surely no. Not only he hath power to destroy them all in a moment, but the very withdrawing of his hand, that upholds their being (though they consider it not), would make them fall to nothing. Yet

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is he pleased not only to spare transgressors, but to give them many outward blessings, *rain and fruitful seasons*, as the apostle speaks, Acts xiv. 17. And the earth which is so full of man's rebellion, is yet more full of God's goodness: *The earth is full of thy goodness*, says the psalmist. It is remarkable that that same reason which is given, Gen. vi. 5, of the justice of God in drowning the world, is, in chapter viii. 21, rendered as the reason of God's resolved patience ever since: *And the Lord said, I will not curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.*

Then consider his *grace*, in finding a way of reconcilement, and not sparing his own Son, his only begotten Son, to accomplish it. Nor did the Son spare himself. O matchless love! to lay down his life, not for friends, but for strangers; not only so, but enemies, for unrighteous and ungodly persons, such as be at enmity against him. Romans v. 7, 8. And having done this, he sends his word, the message of reconciliation, to rebels, and sends his Spirit into the hearts of those whom he hath appointed to salvation, to change their spirits, that they perish not in disobedience: he brings *them near who were far off*, having slain this enmity by the death of his Son.

As many of you, then, as have hitherto heard this message of reconciliation in vain, be persuaded at last to give ear to it. This is all that God's ambassadors require, according to their instructions from himself, that men would lay down their enmity against him, and not be so foolish as wilfully to perish in it: *We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* 2 Cor. v. 20.

Consider that this enmity is, 1*st*, unjust, 2*dly*, unhappy. (1.) Unjust it is, being against him who is the chief object of love, who is altogether goodness, both in himself and toward his creatures. It is too much not to love him with most ardent and superlative affection; but to entertain enmity against him is madness. As it was said to one who asked, "Why are the beautiful loved?"—"*It is a blind man's question;*" certainly we are blind if we see not cause enough, not only to desist from enmity, but to be inflamed with his love. One glance of his amiable countenance is sufficient to cause the most rebellious heart to yield, and lay down arms, and for ever devote itself to his services. No, we know him not, and therefore it is we hold out against him. Is he not the living spring of all our comforts? Have we not from him life, and breath, and all things? And is he not *ready to forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin?* Let mercy melt our hearts to him, those sweet rays of love. Let his loving kindness overcome these stubborn hearts and spirits of ours. Among enemies, the weaker usually seeks first for peace, but here it is the Mighty; Almighty God comes to entreat agreement with sinful clay.

(2.) But if this prevail not, then think how unhappy this enmity is. You who are so afraid of men, and those weak men, of men like yourselves, whose breath is in their nostrils, will ye not tremble at his power, and be afraid to continue on terms of hostility against him who is the Lord of hosts, who hath power both over soul and body, to kill both and cast them into hell? What is the stoutest of men, but as stubble to the flame of his wrath? *Our God is a consuming fire.* Heb. xii. 29. *The sinners in Zion are afraid*, says the prophet. *Who shall dwell*, say they, *with devouring fire and everlasting burnings?* Isa. xxxiii. 14. Then, if you would not perish, when his wrath is kindled, take that word of Eliphaz, Job xxii. 21: *Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee.*

And to you, so many as he hath taken into friendship with himself, look backward to the gulf you have escaped, and forward to the happiness you are appointed to, and let the joint consideration of both awaken your hearts and tongues to praises. How can your hearts contain such a wonder of love as he hath manifested to you, and not run over in songs and praise?

And, as you owe him praises, so study, being made his friends, to become more like him. That same *idem velle, et idem nolle*, to love and hate the same things with him, will be a sure testimony of friendship. And because carnality, or fleshly and earthly mindedness, is here made the character of enmity, mortify those affections, nail them to that cross of Christ whereby the enmity was taken away. And further, being once admitted into friendship labor for a further degree of intimacy with him, and forbear everything that may hinder that. Use frequent converse with him; for that both entertains and increases friendship. If anything fall out on your part (as it too often does), that may occasion any strangeness between you and your God, rest not till it be removed. And if you walk in this way, it shall undoubtedly, at length, bring you where you shall abide in his presence for ever, and shall no more fear any breach or interruption of enjoying him. *To him be praise!* Amen.

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## SERMON X.

### THE TRUE CHRISTIAN, THE BEST SUBJECT.

ROMANS xiii. 5, 6, 7, 8.

Wherefore, ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.
For, for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.
Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.
Owe no man anything, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

THE wisdom and goodness of God, which shine in the natural order and dependance of

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things in the frame of the great world, appear likewise, and commend themselves to us, in the civil order he hath instituted in the societies of men, the lesser world. As out of the same mass he made the heavens and the earth, and the other elements between them, one higher than another, and gave them different stations and qualities, yet so different as to be linked and concatenated together, *concordia discordiâ*, and all for the concern and benefit of the whole; thus, for the good of men, hath the Lord assigned these different stations of rule and subjection (though all are of one race, Acts xviii. 26), raising from among men some above the rest, and clothing them with such authority as hath some representment of himself, and accordingly communicating to them his own name: *I have said, ye are gods.* And the very power that is in magistracy to curb and punish those that despise it, the apostle useth as a strong and hard cord to bind on the duty of obedience, a cord of *necessity.* But he has another of a higher necessity, that binds more strongly, and yet more sweetly, that of *conscience. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.*

*Observe*, 1. This is the main consideration which closes the discourse, the great cord that binds on and fastens all the rest; all the arguments foregoing, therefore, are mainly here to be pressed. Have a reverential and conscientious respect to the ordinance of God in the institution of government, and to the providence of God in his choice of those particular persons whom he calls to it. Contain thyself in thy own station, and submit to those set higher by the Lord, in obedience to him. This, indeed, is the only true spring of all obedience, both to God, and to men for him, and according to his ordinance. To regulate the outward carriage, without the living principle of an enlightened and sanctified conscience within, is to build without a foundation. This is the thing God eyes most. He looks through the surface of men's actions to the bottom, follows them into their source, examines from what motives and reasons they flow. He sees not only the handle of the dial, but all the wheels and weights of the clock that are the cause of its motion, and accordingly judges both men and their actions to be good or evil, as the inward frame and secret motions of the heart are. In his own worship, the outside of it may have the same visage and plausible appearance in a multitude convened to it and concurring in it, and no human eye can trace a difference; and yet, oh, what vast difference doth God's eye discover among them! He sees the multitude of those who are driven to his house by the power of civil and church laws, or carried to it only with the stream of company and custom (and these, I fancy, take up the most room in our churches); but he sees here and there, where such are in any corner, who worship him in singleness of heart, out of conscience to his holy command, and under a sense of their many obligations—those who dare not let pass any opportunity they can reach, of doing service to their Lord, and who dare not slight his word, and thus coming *for conscience' sake*, they do present their souls to receive his word; give their hearts up to receive the impression of it, put themselves under it, to be stamped by it according to that, Rom. vi. 17: *But ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.* So, likewise, he sees those who bear his name to his people, the ministers of his word. If they preach constantly, and live blamelessly, and are diligent and irreprovable in all the external parts of their walking, this last satisfies men's questions in their inspection and visitings; but God's inquiry and visiting search deeper. He asks from what heart all this comes, whether from a holy conscience of the weight and high importance of their holy calling, and a faithful respect to the interest of their Master's glory and his people's souls. And thus, he, as supreme Judge, sits and considers the proceedings of judges and magistrates; not only whether they do that which is just (for often they can not, easily or safely, do otherwise), but whether they do it with regard to him or not; that is, whether they judge righteously, *for conscience' sake*, or not; whether they do consider him, as sitting above them, when they sit down upon the bench or seat of justice, and *do indeed* truly *speak righteousness*, Psalm lviii. 1, or whether in heart they work wickedness. If they have any corrupt end, or hearts that are not straight, he sits on their heart and judges it; whether this be done either for base gain, or vain glory, or by compulsion, or outward necessity, or danger of censure, or whether it be this latter, an inward *necessity of conscience*, which makes a true willingness.

Thus people, if they obey *for wrath*, that is, for fear of the magistrate's sword, more than *for conscience* of the Lord's command, God accounts not this obedience, but in his judgment it goes for no better than rebellion. It is to be feared, too many magistrates, and others, have in this nation embraced the reformation, not at all for conscience' sake, but only for wrath, from fear of laws and authority. But although we are not able to follow forth his search to the full, that being the Lord's own prerogative, yet, truly, where it is evident to us that there is nothing of conscience, though in civil things it may pass, yet, in things that are peculiarly matters of conscience in religion, men ought to be somewhat wary, according to the utmost of due discerning; and we are, possibly, somewhat to blame in the promiscuous admitting of such, whose carriage, yea, whose profession and religion speak aloud, that their compliance was wholly constrained obedience, only *for wrath*, and not *for conscience.*

If civil authority is to be obeyed most for conscience, then, church authority, that is

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more symbolical with conscience, and hath nearer reference to it, ought to aim most at that. *Conviction* and *conversion* is our work, and not *constraint;* to bring people, both by the word and by a way of discipline suiting and backing it, to a sense of sin and spiritual thoughts of God and his holy law, that they may be subject more for conscience than for wrath.

And ye people, labor more to find the actings of that holy fear of God and conscience of his will in all your ways. Study to have an inward light, a practical, sanctifying light, directing you; and be not merely held in as beasts, by the authority and laws of men, but learn to know and be sensible of the sovereign authority of the most high God and his law, and to have respect unto all his commandments. If this were once done, how regular a motion would it keep among all superiors and inferiors of all sorts, in families and states, the one commanding, the other obeying, in God! It would be as sweet music in the celestial choir of their lives and affairs. Right-informing and right-moving consciences would be as continual teachers within, directing all in obedience, and would make it both more constant, sweet, and pleasant, as natural motion; whereas that is grievous and violent which is from wrath, or outward power, and therefore lasts not: as the Israelites worshipped God aright while their good judges lived, and ran after idols when they were removed.

Again. This same obedience *for conscience* ennobles and sublimates men's actions even in civil things, makes them have somewhat Divine, turns all into sacrifice to God, when all is done for God; even servants and children obeying masters and parents, and subjects magistrates, for his command's sake, still thinking, in the whole course of their regular, due carriage, in their very callings, This I do for God; my ordinary labor and works, and my just obedience to men, I offer up to him. This is the philosopher's stone, that turns actions of lower metal into gold; *I set the Lord always before me.* Psalm xvi. 8.

*Obs.* 2. Kings, and other powers of the world, who are the enemies, and sometimes the enraged persecutors of our holy religion, mistake their quarrel, and are very wrongfully misprejudiced against it, when, upon that false supposition, they hate and oppose it, suspecting it as an enemy to their dignity and authority; whereas there is nothing that doth so much assert their just power as religion doth. Civil laws may tie the *hands* and *tongue* to their obedience, but religion binds all due subjection to them upon the very *consciences* of their people. Therefore they are both ungrateful and unwise, in using their power against religion, which it so much strengthens. Their power should strengthen it, both by way of due return, to correspond with it in that, and even for its own interest, receiving a new establishment to itself by establishing religion. Even that master of irreligious policy, Machiavel, confesses that the profession of religion is a friend to authority. But if the shadow of it do anything that way, we see, contrary to his profane supposition, the substance and truth of doth it much more.

*Obs.* 3. If *for conscience' sake* we are to practise this subjection, then, surely in nothing is it our duty to be subject against the true rule of conscience, and the prime object of conscience, the authority and law of God. That is the first and highest, our perpetual, unalterable engagement to him, binding both kings and subjects, both high and low. And if rulers leave their station, we ought to keep ours still, in a straight subjection to God. For the extent of friendship and all other relations, and of all subjection and obedience, is to be ruled and bounded, *usque ad aras. Give to Cesar the things that are Cesar's*, but nothing of God's: that is neither ours to give, nor his to receive.

*For, for this cause pay you tribute also.* This the apostle gives as a sign of that confessed right which magistrates have to the subjection and obedience of the people, that in all nations this homage and acknowledgment is due to them: *Tribute to whom tribute is due.* Which it may be he the rather mentions, because some question might exist, what might Christians do concerning this. However, this, according to the constitution of several places, he takes as granted, to be not only lawful, but due to be rendered. Here we are not to insist on the scanning of this; but certainly, as the power of a magistrate is not in this, nor in any other thing, absolute and unbounded, so, the legal and just paying of tribute and other revenues by the people argues their engagement to those set over them, and is to be rendered, not as wages to a mercenary servant, but as an *honorary due* to their place and calling, who are the *ministers of God* in civil government. So, also, convenient yet liberal maintenance to the ministers of God's own house is their right, yet not to enrich them; nor yet ought it to be given grudgingly, as undue, or superciliously, as to servants, but with the cheerfulness and respect agreeable to the Lord's servants, who watch for their souls.

All tribute and obedience still relate to this, and are grounded on it, the Lord's institution of power and government for the good of men. Though it sometimes prove otherwise in the exercise of it, yet the ordinance is pure, and most wisely suited to its end; from which the sin and corruption of men turn it but too often to the hurt of both the ruler himself and of the ruled, Eccl. viii. 9: *There is a time wherein one man ruleth over another to his own hurt;* each proving a scourge to the other, in the just judgment of God upon both for their iniquities; making *a fire from Abimelech to devour the men of Shechem*, and the men of *Shechem* to deal treacherously with *Abimelech.* Judg. ix. 20. Yet, still the thing itself

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remains good. Many skilful physicians may kill instead of curing, yet it is but a caprice to decry all remedies, and the use of things medicinal, which the God of nature hath furnished for that use. Men may, and alas! most men do, prejudice their own health, by either intemperate or in some way irregular diet; yet this makes nothing against the continual necessity and use of food, nor can dissuade any from using it. Thus, the abuses of authority infringe not this, that magistrates are a public good; yea, the unjust are better than none, tyranny is better than anarchy; there is some justice done in the most unjust government.

But thus, they who are exalted to rule, ought to consider who raised them, and for what they are raised, and so faithfully to do justice. They are raised high, as the stars are set in their orbits, for influence and the good of the inferior world, and like the mountains which rise above the valleys, not to be places of prey and ruin, but, by the streams they send out, to refresh them. So, from magistrates, *judgment ought to run down as water, and justice as a mighty stream.* They ought to consider themselves as *ministers;* though called *magistrates* with relation to the people, yet *ministers* in relation to God [λειτούργοι Θεοῦ], and the people's in him, as the word λειτούργοι imports, being constant laborers for their good; even as the sun is a *minister*, God's minister of heat and light to the earth. Would they look up thus to God, it would make them look down on their inferiors, not with the ill aspect of pride and cruelty, but with the benign looks of good-will, fidelity, and vigilancy for their welfare, knowing that they are appointed for this very use in the world; not referring to that which is nearest here, and nearest themselves, *the receiving of tribute*, but the remotest good, which is the chief end for which their tribute and themselves are appointed, the punishing of the wicked and the encouragement of the good.

*Render therefore to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.* The apostle enlarges his exhortation to the general rule of equity. The humble, upright mind will willingly comply with this, and pay respect to men, in obedience to God, and therefore primarily to him, which the most neglect. *Honor* and *fear* are due to him as to our Father and Master, and yet where is it to be found? *If I be a father, where is mine honor? and if I be a master where is my fear?* Mal. i. 6. The *tribute* of praise and glory in all these respects is due, and ought not to be purloined, nor any part detained; but how few are faithful in this. Much *uncustomed goods* pass among our hands in the course of our lives, many things wherein we are not mindful to give glory, entire glory to God. But he can not be deceived; if we go on, he will take us in our quietest *conveyance*, and all will be forfeited. We shall certainly lose all, if all glory return not to him. All that we have, and are, should we daily and heartily offer up to him, from whom we have life, and breath, and all things.

*Owe no man anything, but to love one another.* That which the apostle set before himself, as his own study and exercise, he doth, in the latter part of this epistle, set forth at large, as the duty of every Christian, to *keep a conscience void of offence toward God and* men. Acts xxiv. 16. And having, in the former part of it, treated amply and excellently of the doctrine of Christian faith and salvation, and ascended to its highest cause, he descends thence to give the rules of a Christian life. And he reduces them to these two; 1. To give the Lord his due, which is *ourselves entire:* our bodies ought to be *a living sacrifice*, and *that* they are not without the soul. And it is love in the soul, that offers up this whole burnt-offering to God, the fire that makes it ascend. 2. Toward men likewise, love is all. Of which, in many several acts of it, he spake likewise in the former chapter, ver. 9, &c.; and having inserted an exhortation to subjection to human authority as a divine institution, he now returns to that main, comprehensive, and universal duty of love, and passes fitly from the mention of other particular dues to superiors, to this, as the general due, or standing debt, which all men owe one to another. So I conceive this is not intended for the further pressing of that particular duty of subjection, by reducing it (as seeming hard in itself) to the sweet and pleasant rule or law of love, but that he passes wholly from that particular to this common duty, so as that it is not excluded, but comprehended here with the rest, though not specially aimed at; a little rivulet running awhile in its own channel, in the foregoing discourse, which falls here in again to the main current of the doctrine of love, begun in the former chapter. And here he chooses, adapting it to the strain of the discourse immediately foregoing it, to express this under the notion of a debt: *Owe nothing, but love.*

1. Let other debt be removed: *Owe nothing.* That is, be not willing to continue debtors of anything to any, by undue retaining of such things as, being paid, are not owing.

2. This is a constant debt, which you must still pay, and yet still owe—*love.* And the reason added, is most enforcing, that we should be willing to continue both *payers* and yet *debtors* of it. The dueness of it appears in this, that the *law* requires it, and the completeness of it, in that it is *all* the law requires: *Love is the fulfilling of the law.* Which is amplified in the two subsequent verses.

This is most fully true, take love fully, as it looks on its full object, *God* and *man;* and so it is the fulfilling of the whole law which relates to those two in its two tables. Take it particularly, as acting toward men

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(as here it is), and so it fulfils that part of the law, that whole table, which respects man. The most of those commandments are expressly here set down (ver. 9), and the omission of one is fully supplied by that addition, *If there be any other.* Then again, it is cleared by the common aim and result of them all, which is to keep our neighbor undamaged, and *that*, love doth most surely and fully; therefore it fulfils all. That negative, *worketh no ill to his neighbor*, answers the strain of all the commandments, which is, to defend our neighbors from our *ill*, being most of them such, and all of them such, that are here specified; yet both they, and this sum of them, involving the contrary, the working of all possible *good* to our neighbor; in which, still love suits it, nothing being both more averse from wrong, and more active in good, than love: as the same apostle hath it, 1 Cor. xiii. Besides that it can not *do*, no, nor so much as *think* evil, it is naturally carried to bounty and kindness, and can not cease from doing good, a plant that is fruitful all the year long.

The apostle hath very good authority for this abridgment of the law; our Savior himself, Matt. xxii. 40. And he takes it out of the books of the law themselves, and certifies us, that it is the substance and sum both of the law and the prophets. Were this love absolutely perfect, the fulfilling of the law would be so too; and where it is sincere, as the apostle requires it, there is a sincere and evangelical obedience, or fulfilling of the law.

In the text, consider, 1. The largeness of its object. 2. The largeness of its acting. 3. The height of its true original.

1. The largeness of the object. So far as thou canst acquit thyself, owe nothing else to any; but love, *owe that to all.* Not a like familiar converse necessarily to all, nor a like measure of beneficence, nor a like degree of love, but yet love alike sincere and real to all. Not either a false, or an empty, fair carriage, but holy Christian love, love rooted in thy heart, and springing up in thy actions, even toward all men, as thy opportunity and ability serve thee, and their condition requires of thee; not hating or despising any for their poverty in estate, or deformity of body, or defects of mind, nor for that which works most on men, injuries done to thyself. All they can do, can not give thee an *acquittance*, or free thee of this *debt* of love; for thou art bound to another. This is the rule of Jesus Christ, and the badge of Christians, to love their very enemies. But this, oh how rare is it! How few attain it! Yea, how few endeavor to attain it! On the contrary, it is by many given over as a desperate, impossible business, they judging of it not according to that spirit of Christ that is his, but according to the corrupt rancor and bitterness of their own natural perverse spirits. Yea, and too many disdain it as a *poorness* and *sheepishness* of spirit to suffer and forgive. Be it so; yet is it such a *sheepishness* as makes a man like *Jesus Christ, who, as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth*, when his heart within was compassionate toward them, as appeared when he opened it concerning them, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* This is true greatness of spirit, to partake of *his* spirit that is the highest and best of spirits, and it is the spirit of *meekness* and *love*. How much is this above the common spirit of the world! Truly base and poor is that which is decomposed and put out of frame with every touch: whereas this is mighty, and triumphs indeed over all provocations and injuries.

2. Let us consider the largeness of its acting: it goes through the law, fulfils it all. That command, the first in the second table, which is not here expressed, is it not love that makes all concerned in it, to fulfil it, that produceth mildness and moderation in superiors, and faithfulness and willing obedience in inferiors; makes both authority and subjection sweet and easy, where love commands and love obeys?

And for the next, *Thou shalt not kill*, doth not love, as the sunbeams put out the fire, by its divine heat eat out the earthly, yea, the infernal fire of fixed malice or rash anger, that burns naturally in the hearts of men? Such anger is called *brutish*, Ezek. xxi. 31; *burning* or *brutish;* and, on the contrary, the ambiguity, Prov. xvii. 27, is happy, *of an excellent* or *of a cool spirit;* for the *cool spirit* is so, cool from base passion, but burning truly with this love. And then this fire is by very small, and many times merely imaginary causes, so easily blown up, that it flames forth into gross murders, or at least such injuries and violences, or contentions and revilings, as go in God's account, and are writ down in his book, for murders. And he doth not misjudge, nor misname things, but they are really what he accounts them. Love can generously pass over those things about which folly and pride make such a noise, *Oh! can I bear this and that?* And thou wouldst, by so saying, speak thy stout-heartedness. Fool, is this stoutness and strength? Is it not rather the greatest weakness to be able to bear nothing? Have not the weakest persons much of that kind of stoutness and strength, who are the soonest moved and disquieted, women and children, and sick or aged persons? But love, Christian love to thy brother, makes the mind truly strong and composed, not easily stirred against him for every trifle, nay, not for greater matters. Love can *endure* much, yea, *all things*, says the apostle, 1 Cor. xiii. 7: it hath strength to stand under them, and stand firm; whereas base minds, void of love, break all to pieces under a very small weight. Love *beareth all things*, as the supporters of a strong and firm building; or rather, as a house, it *covers all*, for so the word signifies. It doth not blaze abroad the failings of men; yea, it *hides* much, *covers a multitude of sins*, not only

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from the eyes of others, but even from a man's own eyes; makes him not behold and look on those things that might provoke him. Yea, it is ingenious and inventive of the fairest constructions of things, to take them by the best side, in the favorable sense; and so long as there is any agreeable way to interpret anything favorably, will not have a hard thought of it, *thinks no ill*, as there it is. Not only hath it no active evil thoughts of revenge, or returning evil, but willingly it doth not *judge ill* of what is done by others, and what might be so looked on as to provoke: λογίζεται, doth not *reckon* wrongs so high as want of charity moves the most to do, it *sets them low*. And as a healthful constitution is sweet itself, and relishes all things right, so there is more true pleasure and content of mind in forgiving, than ever any man found in revenge. This is but a feverish delight which malice and anger have wrought, working perhaps greedily, but it is indeed a distemper. This love is the very root of peace and concord, an humble grace, that is not *lifted up* and *insolent*, as the word there is, and so doth not breed jars about punctilios: it esteems so well of others, and so meanly of itself, that it can not well be crossed by any in that matter of undervaluing. But vain spirits are puffed up with a little approbation, and as easily kindled up with any affront or apprehended disgrace. Love is not lightly put out of temper, as, in sickly constitutions, a fit of fever or ague is brought on by any blast or wrong touch of diet: it is of a stronger digestion, and firmer health.

Then for that commandment, *Thou shalt not commit adultery*, all things of that kind, though they spring from a kind of love, yet are not from this love *from above*, but (as the Apostle James distinguishes wisdom) proceed from the love that is *sensual* and *devilish*. *Love* is not the true name of it, but base and brutish *lust*. And generally, all profane societies, and sortings of men one with another, are most contrary to this pure love. The drunkards who are cup-friends, as they are full of jars, and have no constancy, but are unstable as that wherein their friendship lies, their liquor, are a vile, despicable society, not worthy of men, much less of Christians. This sin hath affinity with uncleanness, and is usually ranked there. Right love to a tipler, is not to sit down and guzzle with him, but to reprove and labor to reclaim him, and where that can not be done, to avoid him. To wicked persons we owe, not a complacency or delight, which is most contrary to this love, but, hating their sin, we owe them love, and the desiring, and, as far as love can, the procuring of their conversion and salvation. Wicked converse can not consist with this love, which is the fulfilling of the law, and not a combination for the breaking of it, and the joining of their strength together for that end. Love *rejoiceth not in iniquity, but in the truth:* it makes not men rejoice together in sin. So foul, unclean affections, and a society in order to the gratifying of them, are most contrary to it. True love is most tender of the chastity of others, and can not abide an impure thought in itself.

So, as to the next precept, *Thou shalt not steal*, love would be loath to enrich or advantage itself upon the damage of others in any kind. It doth most faithfully and singly seek the profit and prosperity of our neighbor even as our own. And if this took place, of how much use were it in the world! But oh! it is rare. This *meum* and *tuum* is the grand cause of the ill understanding and discords that are among men, when things are not managed by this love, but by self-love.

And so, as to that, *Thou shalt not bear false witness*, the cherishing and preserving of the good name of our brethren is a proper and very remarkable fruit of this love, which is so far from forging false, defaming stories, that it will rather *excuse*, if it may be done, or if not, will *pity* the real failings of men which tend to their reproach; and, on the contrary, will teach men to rejoice in the good carriage and good esteem of their brethren, as in their own.

In the end, love works such a *complacency* in the good of others, and such a *contentation* with our own estate, that it most powerfully banishes that unruly humor of *coveting*, which looks on the condition of others with envy, and on our own with grudging and discontent. This law of love written within, doth not only rectify and order the hands and the tongue, but the jealousies, the very stirrings of the heart: it corrects the usual disorder of its motion, and bars those uncharitable, inordinate thoughts, that do so abound and swarm in carnal minds.

3. The *original* of this love, is that other love which corresponds to the other part, the first and chief point of the law, our *duty toward God*. Love to him is the sum and source of all obedience. When the whole soul and mind is possessed with that, then all is acceptable and sweet that he commands; first, what he commands as immediately referrible to himself, and then, what is the rule of our carriage to men as being prescribed and commanded by him. For so, and no otherwise, is this love *the fulfilling of the law*, when it flows from that *first* love, love to God, whose law it is that commands this other love to men. Some men may have somewhat like it, by a mildness and ingenuousness of nature, being inoffensive and well-disposed toward all; but then only doth it fulfil the law, when out of regard to the law of God it obeys, and obeys out of love to him whose law it is. So, then, the love of God in the heart is the spring of right and holy love to our neighbor, both (1.) Because in obedience to him whom we love sovereignly, we shall love others sincerely, because he will have it so. That is reason enough to the soul possessed and taken up with his love. It loves nothing, how lovely soever, but in him



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and for him, in order and subordination to his love, and in respect to his will; and it loves anything, how unlovely soever, taking it in that contemplation. It loves not the dearest friend but in God, and can love the hatefullest enemy for him: *Amicum in Deo, et inimicum propter Deum.* [Augustine.] His love can beautify the most unamiable object, and make it lovely. He saith of a worthless, undeserving man, or thy most undeserving enemy, Love him for my sake, because it pleases me; and that is reason enough to one who loves him. (2.) There is that dilating, sweetening virtue in love to God, that it can act in no other way to men but as becomes love. Base self-love contracts the heart, and is the very root of all sin, the chief wickedness in our corrupt nature; but the love of God assimilates the soul to him, makes it divine, and therefore bountiful, full of love to all. So these two contradict not, *Love the Lord with all thy heart*, and *thy neighbor as thyself.* If all our love must go to God, what remains, say you, for our neighbor? Indeed, all must go upward, and be all placed on him, and thence it is resounded and regulated downward to men, according to his will. But self-love brings forth pride, and cruelty, and covetousness, and uncleanness, and disdain of others, and all such kind of monsters; so, it is the main breaking of the law.

All that can be said, will not persuade men to this, till the Lord by his love teach it and impress it on the heart. Know that this is the badge of Christ's followers, and his great rule and law given to them; and if you will follow him, that you may come to be where he is, then study this, that as our Lord Christ loved us, so, also, we ought to love one another.

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## SERMON XI.

### GRAPES FROM THORNS.

Great and various are the evils that lodge within the heart of man. Hence proceed *evil thoughts, adulteries, murders*, and many other mischiefs, as our Savior specifies there, Matt. xv. 19: they come forth apace, and yet, the heart is not emptied of them. But was this heart thus at first, when it came newly forth of the hands of its Maker? Surely not. *Man was made upright, but he found out many inventions.* Eccl. vii. 29. Soon did the the heart find the way to corrupt itself; but to renew itself, is as impossible as to have been the author of its own creation. Easily could it deface the precious characters of God's image, but it passes the heart of men and angels to restore them. Only the Son of God, who for that purpose took on him our nature, can make us, according to the apostle's phrase, *partakers of the Divine nature.* It is he alone that can banish those unclean spirits, and keep possession that they return no more. Have not they made a happy change of guests, who have those infernal troops turned out of doors, and the King of Glory fixing his abode within them? This is the voice of the gospel: *Lift up your heads, ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may enter in.* Psalm xxiv. 7. But small is the number of those who open where this voice is daily sounded. Yea, some there are, who grow worse under the frequent preaching of the word, as if sin were emulous, and, as is said of virtue, would grow by opposition. The truth is, too many of us turn those serious exercises of religion into an idle divertisement. Take heed that formality, and custom, and novelty, do not often help to fill up many rooms in our church. It were indeed a breach of charity, to entertain the fulness of your assemblies with an ill construction: no, it is to be commended. But would to God we were more careful to show our religion in our lives, to study to know better the deceits and impostures of our own hearts, and to gain daily more victory over our secret and best beloved sins! Let our intentions, then be to meet with Christ here, and to admit him gladly to dwell and rule within us. If he conquer our inward enemies, those without shall not be able to hurt us. If he deliver us from our sinful lusts, he will stir our own distrustful fears. And that such may be the fruits of our meeting, let us turn ourselves toward the throne of grace, with humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, the righteous.

### Psalm lxxvi. 10.

Surely, the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

*What manner of man is this*, said the passengers in the ship, *that even the winds and the sea obey him?* Matt. viii. 27. Christ suddenly turns a great tempest into a greater calm. Surely, those are no ordinary words of command, which swelling waves and boisterous winds, in the midst of their rage, are forced to hear, and taught to understand and obey. Therefore, the holding of the seas in the hollow of his hand, the bridling of the wind, and riding upon the wings of it, we find peculiarly attributed to the Almighty. But no less, if not more wonderful, is another of his prerogatives, to wit, his sovereignty over all mankind, over the divers and strange motions of the heart of man. Admirable is it to govern those, both in respect of their multitude and irregularity. Consider we what millions of men dwell at once upon the face of the earth, and again, what troops of several imaginations will pass through the fancy of any one man, within the compass of one day; it is much to keep eye upon them, and to behold them all at once, but far more to command and control them all. Yet, if they were all loyal and willingly obedient, were

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they tractable and easily curbed, it were more easy for us to conceive how they might be governed. But to bound and overrule the unruly hearts of men, the most of whom continually are either plotting or acting rebellion against their Lord, to make them all concur and meet at last in one end, can not be done but by a power and a wisdom that are both infinite. That God whose name we often mention, but seldom think on his excellency, is alone the absolute monarch of men's hearts, and the ruler of all their motions. He hath them limited while they seem most free, and works his own glory out of their attempts, while they strive most to dishonor him. *Surely, the wrath of man shall praise thee.*

This Psalm is made up of two different sorts of thoughts; the one arising out of *particular experience*, and the other out of a *general doctrine*. Those drawn from *experience*, are set down in the verses preceding the text: and in it, with those that follow, is contained the *doctrine*, with a *duty* annexed to it, which two are faith's main supporters. Past experiences verify the doctrine, and the generality of the doctrine serves to explain the particular experiences to all wise observers. There is not a treasure of the *merits* of saints in the church, as some dream, but there is a treasure of the precious *experiences* of the saints, which every believer hath right to make use of; and these we should be versed in, that we may have them in readiness at hand, in time of need, and know how to use them to draw both comfort from them to ourselves, and arguments to use with God.

The words contain clearly two propositions, both of them concerning the *wrath of man:* the former hath the event of it, *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee;* the latter, the limitation of it, *The remainder of wrath thou wilt restrain.*

That the virtues and graces of men do praise the Lord, all men easily understand, for they flow from him: his image and superscription are upon them, and therefore no wonder if he has from them a tribute of glory. Who knows not that faith praises him? *Abraham believed and gave glory to God.* Rom. iv. 20. Good works, the fruits of faith, praise him too. *Herein is my father glorified,* says our Savior, *that ye bear much fruit.* John xv. 8. But that the inordinate wrath of man should praise him, may seem somewhat strange. Were it God's own wrath (since wrath is attributed to him in Scripture), that might praise him, for it is always most just. Or were it a due and moderate anger of man, upon just cause, that were fit for praising him too, in despite of the stoics. But that *wicked* and *disordered wrath* (which is undoubtedly here meant), that the *wrath of men*, which is both uncomely and dishonorable for themselves, though they think otherwise, that even such a wrath should honor God and praise him, argues well both that he hath good right to praises, when everything even things that seem contrary to his nature as well as to his law, do pay them to him, and that he hath great power and wisdom who obtains what is due to him even from those persons and things which of themselves are most unwilling and unfit to pay it This is the excellent skill of his wisdom, to draw that which shall go into the making up of the precious composition of his praise, out of this *poison:* for so the word here used for *wrathful heat*, doth sometimes signify. And this wrath often proves so, a deadly poison both to those it is incensed against, and to the very breast that breeds it, and wherein it is kindled.

But for the clearer understanding of this, I conceive it will be requisite to consider more distinctly, first, what this *wrath of man* is; secondly, how it can *praise God;* and lastly, the *infallibility* of this event, *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee.*

I. In the cxlviiith Psalm, where David summons the creatures to meet in that song of praise, to keep that full concert, he calls not only the heavens and the inhabitants of it, angels and lights, but those of the lower world to bear their part in it; and not only men, beasts, cattle, creeping things, and the flying fowl, but those creatures which do most resemble this wrath here spoken of, fire, stormy tempest, and dragons, *&c.* The tenor of this Psalm doth show, that by the *wrath of man* is to be understood the undue rage of evil and ungodly men against those whom God owns for his people. The word here used, signifies a *hot* or *inflaming* wrath; and indeed such is the feverish, distempered anger of the church's enemies. And as too much heat is an enemy to solid reason, this hot wrath of theirs makes them incapable of wise deliberation in themselves, and inflexible to the good advice of others. It is true they take counsel how to execute their wrath, as we shall hear anon, but they take no counsel that may cool it. Anger, described, by its material cause, is called a boiling of the blood about the heart; but this ariseth from the apprehension of something offensive, kindling a desire of revenge. Now it is a wonder what the powers of the world find in Christ and his harmless flock, that can incense them. St. James says of the tongue, that *it is set on fire of hell.* The same is the origin of this wrath. *Why do the heathen rage?* saith the psalmist, Psalm ii. 1. That is, not only to what purpose, intimating that it is a fruitless rage, and void of success, in regard of God's power, but *Why*, that is, *upon what occasion*, checking the rage as groundless and without cause, in regard of Christ and his church's innocency. The cause is only within themselves, to wit, that unhappy antipathy of the serpent's seed against the seed of the woman. Thus, this *wrath of man* is, the causeless, malicious enmity of the wicked against the church of God. And un-

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der the name of this passion I take to be here comprised likewise, all the attendants of it, all their crafty complotments and devices for the acting of their wrath. As there is mention of the nation's rage against Christ, in the second Psalm, so, likewise, of the consultations of those who are of quality fit for it: *The rulers take counsel together.* Further, this wrath is not barely their inward fire, but the vent of it, when it flames into cruel and outrageous practices, including likewise all the instruments they make use of. And of all these it is true, that God shall gain glory by them. *Surely, the wrath of man shall praise thee.*

The *wrath of man*, says the apostle, *accomplisheth not the righteousness of God.* Jam. i. 20. How, then, can it accomplish his praises? And this is the IId thing propounded.

*Are grapes gathered of thorns, or figs of thistles?* Surely not. Therefore I called this phrase not the fruit or proper effect of man's wrath, but the event or consequent of it, by the efficacy of Divine providence. *The wrath of man shall praise thee.* That is, the use which thou wilt make of it, shall tend to thy praise. Thou wilt produce such effects from it, both in the church and upon thine enemies, when thou sufferest thy wrath to break forth, as shall furnish more matter of thy praises than if thou hadst altogether restrained it. To instance this in some few particulars:—

It is the fury of the church's enemies, that has made known to the world the invincible *courage and patience of the saints.* Those ages which have been most monstrous in persecution, have most of all graced Christianity. Had there been no persecuting emperors, who would have heard of those primitive martyrs who triumphed over the cruelty of their torments? Were there no persecution, or peril, nor sword, against believers, we should not have heard the apostle say, immediately after the mention of those, *In all these we are more than conquerors.* They could not have been so much as *conquerors* had there been no *conflict.*

Again, as the wrath of man praises God in the invincible patience of the saints, so, likewise, in the *immoveable stability of the church.* Is it not wonderful how so small and weak a company as the church hath often been reduced to, yea, hath always been in respect of the world, could escape the mouths of so many lions, so many enraged enemies that were ready to devour it? And that we may see that this tends solely to the praise of her great Protector, look to the church's song penned by the royal prophet; it is the CXXIVth Psalm: *If it had not been the Lord that was on our side, when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick.* The great monarchies and kingdoms of the world, which have risen with so much splendor, have had their periods and been buried in the dust. That golden-headed and silver-bodied image degenerated into worse metal as it went lower, and the brittle feet were the cause of the fall and breaking of all the rest. But the kingdom of Jesus Christ, though despicable in the world, and exposed to the wrath of the world in all ages, stands firm and can not be removed. There is a common emblem of the winds blowing from all quarters, and upon the globe of the earth, being in the middle of them, is written *Immobilis.* This fitly resembles the church. Why, it seems to be the sport of all the winds, but is indeed so established, that all of them, yea, *the very gates of hell can not prevail against it.* Now, the more the church's enemies labor and moil themselves to undo her, the more do their weakness and the power of her Lord appear; so that thus *the wrath of man doth praise him.*

When was the church free from the world's wrath? To say nothing of the church of the Jews, did not those wicked emperors of Rome think to have made the Christian church short-lived, to have drowned her newly-born in floods of her own blood? And in latter ages, who knows not the cruelties that have been practised by the Turk in the East, and the proud prelate of Rome in the West? By which she hath sometimes been brought to so obscure and low a point, that if you can follow her in history, it is by the track of her blood; and if you would see her, it is by the light of those fires in which her martyrs have been burnt. Yet hath she still come through and survived all that wrath, and still shall survive, till she be made perfectly triumphant.

Further: men's wrath tends to God's praise in this, that God, giving way to it, doth so manage it by his sublime providence, that it often directly crosses their own ends, and conduces manifestly to his. Pharaoh thought that his dealing more cruelly with the Jews in their tasks and burdens, was wisdom: *Let us work wisely,* says he. But whereas their ordinary servility was become familiar to them, and they were tamed to it, that same accession of new tyranny did prepare and dispose the Israelites for a desire of departure, and their departure made way for Pharaoh's destruction. Undigestible insolency and rage, hastening to be great, make kingdoms cast them off, which would have been far longer troubled with their wickedness, had it been more moderate. Surely, then, the wrath of man commends the *wisdom* of God, when he makes him by that contrive and afford the means of his own downfall. *The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down,* says Bildad, Job xviii. 7. And that is a sad fall; as that eagle that was shot with an arrow trimmed with her own feathers.

But to close this point. It is out of all question, that the deserved punishment of man's unjust wrath doth always glorify the justice of God; and the more he gives way

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to their wrath, the more notable shall be both their punishment and the justice of it. And though God seems neglective of his people and of his praise, while man's wrath prevails, yet the truth is, he never comes too late to vindicate his care of both; and when he defers longest, the enemy pays dear interest for the time of forbearance. In his eternal decree, he resolved to permit the course of man's wrath for his own glory, and when the period which he hath fixed is come, he stops man's wrath, and gives course unto the justice of his own. Nor is there, then, any possibility of escaping. He will right himself, and be known by executing judgment. *Surely, the wrath of man shall praise thee.*

And that is the IIId thing propounded, the *infallibility of the event.*

The Author of nature governs all his creatures, each in a suitable way to the nature he hath given them. He maintains, in some things, a *natural necessity* of working, *contingency* in others, and in others, *liberty;* but all of them are subject to this *necessity* of effecting inevitably his eternal purposes. And this necessity is no way repugnant to the due liberty of man's will. Some entertain and maintain the truth; some plot, others act and execute, against it; some please themselves with a wise neutrality, and will appear so indifferent that it would seem they might be accepted of all sides for judges of controversies. And all these find no less liberty to wind and turn themselves whither they please, than if no higher hand had the winding of them. Yet shall not only the *zeal* of the godly, but even the *wrath* of the enemy, and the *cold discretion* of the neutral, *all* tend to his praise whose supreme will will have a secret, but a sure and infallible sway in all their actions. While some passengers sit, some walk one way, some another, some have their faces toward their journey's end, some their back turned upon it, this wise Pilot does most skilfully guide the ship to arrive with them all at his own glory. Happy they who propound and intend his glory as he himself does, for in them shall the riches of his mercy be glorified! They who oppose him, lose this happiness, but he is sure not to lose his glory for all that, to wit, the glory of his justice. His right hand shall find out all his enemies. *Surely, the wrath of man shall praise thee.*

The consideration of this truth, thus in some measure unfolded, may serve to justify the truly wise dispensations of God against our imaginary wisdom. Were the matter referred to our modelling, we should assign the church constant peace and prosperity for her portion, and not consent that the least air of trouble should come near her: we would have no enemies to molest her, nor stir against her, or if they did stir, we would have them to be presently repressed; and these, in our judgment, would be the fairest and most glorious tokens of *his* love and power whose spouse she is. But this carnal wisdom is *enmity against God*, and is opposed to the glory of God, which rises so often out of the wrath of his enemies. Had God caused Pharaoh to yield at the very first to the release of his people, where had been the fame of those miraculous judgments in Egypt, and those mercies on the Israelites, the one setting out and illustrating the other? Where had been that name and honor which God says he would gain to himself, and which he did gain out of Pharaoh's final destruction, making that stony-hearted king and his troops *sink like a stone in the waters*, as Moses sings? Observe his proud boastings immediately foregoing his ruin: *I will pursue*, says he, *I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied on them: I will draw my sword, and my hand shall destroy them.* Soon after, the sea quenches all this heat. Commonly, big threatenings are unhappy presages of very ill success. That historian [Herodotus] says well of God, *Deus neminem alium, quam seipsum, sinit de se magnifice sentire:* God suffers no other to think highly of himself, than himself alone. And indeed, as he abhors those boastings, so he delights in the abasing of the lofty heart whence they flow, and it is his prerogative to gain praise to himself out of their wrath. *Hast thou an arm like God?* says the Lord to Job, then, *look upon the proud and bring them low.* Job xl. 9, 12. When Sennacherib came up against Jerusalem, his blasphemies and boastings were no less vast and monstrous than the number of his men and chariots. Good Hezekiah turned over the matter unto God, spreading the letter of blasphemies before him, upon which God undertook the war, and assured Hezekiah that the Assyrian should not so much as shoot an arrow against the city, but return the same way he came. 2 Kings xix. 33. And the deliverance there promised and effected, is conceived to have been the occasion of penning this very Psalm. Surely, when an angel did in one night slay one hundred and eighty-five thousand in their camps, that wrath and those threats tended exceedingly to the praise of the God of Israel. The hook that he put in Sennacherib's nostrils (as the history speaks), to pull him back again, was more remarkable than the fetters would have been, if he had tied him at home, or hindered his march with his army.

Who is he then that will be impatient because of God's patience, and judge him slack in judgment, while the rage of the wicked prevails awhile? Know, that he is more careful of his own glory than we can be, and the greater height man's wrath arises to, the more honor shall arise to him out of it. Did not his omnipotency shine brighter in the flames of that furnace into which the three children were cast, than if the king's wrath had been at first cooled? Certainly, the more both it and the furnace had their heat augmented, the more was God glorified. *Who is that God*, saith he, blasphemously and proud-

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ly, *that can deliver you out of my hands?* Dan. iii. 15. A question, indeed, highly dishonoring the Almighty, but stay till the real answer come; and then, not only shall that wrath praise him, but that very same tongue, though inured to blasphemy, shall be taught to bear a main part in the confession of those praises. Let that apostate emperor [Julian] go taunting the Head and tormenting the members of that mystical body, his closing with Ἐνίκησας Γαλιλαῖε, *Thou hast overcome, O Galilean* (meaning Christ), shall help to verify that, whether its course be shorter or longer, man's wrath ends always in God's praise. In like manner, the closing of the lions' mouth spake louder to his praise who stopped them than if he had stopped Daniel's enemies in the beginning of their wicked design. So hot was their rage, that the king's favorable inclination to Daniel (of which, in other cases, courtiers used to be so devout observers), yea, his contesting and pleading for him, did profit him nothing, but they hurried their king to the execution of their unjust malice, though themselves were convinced that nothing could be found against him, but only concerning *the law of his God.* Dan. vi. 5. It is said, ver. 14, that King Darius *set his heart on Daniel to deliver him, and he labored to do it till the going down of the sun,* and then those counsellors and counsels of darkness overcame him. But upon this black night of their prevailing wrath, followed a bright morning of praises to Daniel's God, when the lions that were so quiet company all night to Daniel, made so quick a breakfast of those accursed courtiers who had maliciously accused him. *Even so let thine enemies perish, O Lord, and let those that love thee be as the sun when he goes forth in his might!*

The other proposition concerns the limiting of his wrath: *The remainder of wrath thou wilt restrain.*

To take no notice, for the present, of divers other readings of these words, the sense of them, as they are here very well rendered, may be briefly this: that whereas the wrath of man to which God gives way, shall praise him, the rest shall be *curbed* and *bound up,* as the word is; no more of it shall break forth than shall contribute to his glory. Here should be considered divers ways and means by which God useth to stop the heady course of man's wrath, and hinder its proceeding any further; but only, for the present, let us take out of it this lesson, that the most compendious way to be safe from the violence of men, is to be on terms of friendship with God.

Is it not an incomparable privilege, to be in the favor and under the protection of ONE, whose power is so transcendent that no enemy can so much as stir without his leave? Be persuaded, then, Christians, in these dangers that are now so near us, every one to draw near to him. Remove what may provoke him. Let no reigning sin be found either in your cities or in your villages, for he is a holy God. 'Is it a time to multiply provocations now, or is it not rather high time to be humbled for the former? What shameless impiety is it, to be now licentious or intemperate, to be proud, to oppress or extort, to profane God's day, and blaspheme his name! All these sins, and many others, abound among us, and that avowedly. Without abundance of repentance for these, we shall smart, and the wrath of our enemies, though unjust in them, shall praise God in our just punishment; though, doubtless, he will own his church, and be praised likewise in the final punishment of their wrath who rise against it. There is a remarkable expression in the ninety-ninth Psalm, of God's dealing with his people: *Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance on their inventions.* A good cause and a covenant with God, will not shelter an impenitent people from sharper correction. It is a sad word God speaks by his prophet to his own people: *I myself will fight against you,* Jer. xxi. 5. A dreadful enemy! and none, indeed, are truly dreadful but he. Oh! prevent his anger, and you are safe enough. If perverse sinners will not hear, yet, let those who are indeed Christians, mourn in secret, not only for their own sins, but let them bestow some tears likewise upon the sins of others. Labor to appease the wrath of God, and he will either appease man's wrath, or, howsoever, will turn it jointly to our benefit and his own glory. Let the fear of the most high God, who hath no less power of the strongest of his enemies, than over the meanest of his servants; let his fear, I say, possess all our hearts, and it will certainly expel that ignoble and base fear of the wrath of man. See how the prophet opposes them, Isa. viii. 12. *Fear not their fears* says he, *nor be afraid; but sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.* Fear not, yet fear. This holy fear begets the best courage: the breast that is most filled with it, abounds most in true magnanimity. Fear thus, that you may be confident, not in yourselves, though your policy and strength were great, *for cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm,* but confident in that God who is too wise and vigilant to be surprised, too mighty to be foiled, and too rich to be outspent in provision; who can suffer his enemy to come to the highest point of apparent advantage, without any inconvenience, yea, with more renown in his conquest. And so, a Christian who is made once sure of this (as easily he may), is little careful about the rest. His love to God prevailing over all his affections, makes him very indifferent what becomes of himself or his dearest friends, so God may be glorified! What though many fall in the quarrel, (which God avert!) yet, it is sufficient that truth in the end shall be victorious. Have not the saints in all ages been content to con-

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very pure religion to posterity, in streams of their own blood, not of others? Well, hold fast by this conclusion, that God can limit and bind up the most violent wrath of man, so that, though it swell, it will not break forth. The stiffest heart, as the current of the most impetuous rivers, is in his hand, to appoint its channels, and turn it as he pleaseth. Yea, it is he that hath shut up the very sea with bars and doors, and said, *Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther, here shall thy proud waves be stayed.* Job xxxviii. 10, 11. To see the surges of a rough sea come in toward the shore, a man would think that they were hastening to swallow up the land; but they know their limits, and are beaten back into foam. *Though the waves thereof toss themselves,* as angry at their restraint, yet, the small sand is a check to the great sea, *yet can they not prevail: though they roar, yet can they not pass over it.* Jer. v. 22.

The sum is this: what God permits his church's enemies to do, is for his own further glory; and reserving this, there is not any wrath of man so great, but he will either sweetly calm it, or strongly restrain it. To him be praise and dominion for ever.

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## SERMON XII.

### THE BELIEVER A HERO.

### PSALM cxii. 7.

**He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.**

ALL the special designs of men agree in this; they seek satisfaction and quietness of mind, that is, happiness. This, then, is the great question, Who is the happy man? It is here resolved, ver. 1: *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth in his commandments.*

The blessedness is unfolded, like a rich landscape, that we may view the well-mixed colors, the story and tissue of it, through the whole *alphabet* in capital letters. And take all and set them together, it is a most full and complete blessedness, not a letter wanting to it.* Among the rest, that which we have in these words, is of a greater magnitude and brightness than many of the rest, *He shall not be afraid of evil things.*

Well may the Psalm begin with a *Hallelujah*, a note of praise to him in whom this blessedness lies. Oh, what a wretched creature were man, if not provided with such a portion! Without which there is nothing but disappointment, and thence the racking torment and vexation of a disquieted mind, still pursuing somewhat that he never overtakes.

The first words are the inscription, *The blessedness of that man,* &c. So, the particulars follow; where outward blessings are so set, as that they look and lead higher, pointing at their end, the infinite goodness whence they flow, and whither they return and carry along with them this happy man.

And these promises of outward things are often evidently accomplished to the righteous, and their seed after them, and that, commonly, after they have been brought very low. But when it is otherwise with them, they lose nothing. It is good for *many,* yea, it is good for *all* the godly, that they should have less of these lower things, in order to raise their eye to look after higher—the eye of *all,* both of those who are held somewhat short, and of those that have abundance in the world.

These temporal promises were more abounding, and more frequently fulfilled in their very kind, in the times of the law; yet, still the right is constant, and all ages do give clear examples of the truth of this word. Where it is thus, it is a blessing created by its aspect to this promise, and so differs from the prosperity of ungodly men; and where it is otherwise with the righteous and their seed, it is no shift, but a most solid comfort, to turn their eyes to a higher compensation.

But, howsoever it go with them, this still holds, *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings.* Notwithstanding the hardest news that can come to his ears, of anything that concerns either himself or his children, or the rest of God's children in his charge, in the world, *his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.*

First, let us take a view of the character of this blessed man. Who is it that is thus undaunted? *The man that feareth God.*

All the passions are but several ebbings and flowings of the soul, and their motions are the signs of its temper, which way it is carried; *that* is mainly to be remarked by the beating of its pulse. If our desires, and hopes, and fears, be in the things of this world, and the interests of flesh, this is their distemper and disorder, the soul is in a continual fever. But if they move Godward, then it is composed and calm, in a good temper and healthful state, fearing and loving him, desiring him, and nothing but him, waiting for him, and trusting in him. And when any one affection is right and in a due aspect to God, all the rest are so too; for they are radically one. And he is the life of that soul which is united to him: and so, in him, it moves in a peculiar spiritual manner, as all do naturally in the dependance of their natural life on him who is the Fountain of life.

Thus we have here this *fear of God,* as often elsewhere, set out as the very substance of holiness and evidence of happiness. And that

* This Psalm, in the Hebrew, consists of twenty-two short verses, each of which begins with one of the letters of the alphabet in their order, till they are all ended. No one letter is here omitted, as is the case in the xxvth Psalm, where the same order is observed.

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we may know there is nothing either base or grievous in this fear, we have joined with it, *delight* and *trust*: *That delighteth greatly in his commandments*: which is that badge of love to him, to observe them, and that with delight, and with exceeding great delight. So then, this fear is not that which love casts out, but that which love brings in. This fear follows and flows from love. It is a fear to offend, whereof nothing is so tender as love, and that, in respect of the greatness of God, hath in it withal an humble reverence. There is in all love a kind of reverence, a cautious and respective wariness toward the party loved; but especially in this, where not only we stand in a lower relation, as children to our Father, but the goodness which draws our love doth infinitely transcend our measures and reach: therefore, there is a *rejoicing with trembling*, and an awful love, a *fearing the Lord and his goodness*. Hos. iii. 5. This is both *fear* and *trust*. The heart touched by the spirit of God, as the needle touched with the loadstone, looks straight and speedily to God, yet still *with trembling*, being filled with this holy fear.

*That delighteth.* Oh! this is not only to do them, but to do them with delight: there is somewhat within that is connatural and symbolical with them. Yea, this very law itself is writ within, not standing as a hard taskmaster over our head, but impressed within, as a sweet principle in our hearts, and working thence naturally. This makes a soul find pleasure in the purging out of sensual pleasures, and ease in doing violence to corrupt self, even undoing it for God, having no will but his. The remainders of sin and self in our flesh, will be often rising up, but this predominant love dispels them. So, this fear works with delight.

And further, that we may know how serene and sweet a thing it is, it is here likewise joined with confidence, *trusting in the Lord;* a quickening confidence always accompanying it, and so, undoubtedly, it is a blessed thing. *Blessed is he that feareth. Fear* sounds rather quite contrary, hath an air of misery; but add, *whom? That feareth the Lord.* That touch turns it into gold. He that so fears, fears not: *He shall not be afraid.* All petty fears are swallowed up in this great fear, as a spirit inured with great things, is not stirred nor affected at all with small matters. And this great fear is as sweet and pleasing as those little fears are anxious and vexing. Secure of other things, he can say, If my God be pleased, no matter who is displeased. No matter who despise me, if he account me his. Though all forsake me, my dearest friends grow estranged, and look another way, if he reject me not, that is my only fear, and for that I am not perplexed; I know he will not. As they answered Alexander, when he sent to inquire what they most feared, thinking possibly they would have said, lest he should invade them; but their answer was, *We fear nothing but lest heaven should fall upon us;* which they did not fear neither: so, a believer hath no fear but of the displeasure of heaven, lest the anger of God should fall upon him; he fears *that;* that is, accounts *that* only terrible; but yet, he doth not fear, doth not apprehend it will fall upon him, he is better persuaded of the goodness of his God. So this *fear* is still joined with *trust*, as here, so often elsewhere. Psalm xxxiii. 18, xl. 3, and cxlvii. 11.

There is no turbulency in this fear; it is calm and sweet. Even that most terrible evil, that which this fear properly apprehends and flies, *sin*, yet, the fear of that goes not to a distraction. Though there is little strength, and many and great enemies, mighty *Anakims* of temptations from without, and corruptions within, and so, good reason for a holy, humble fear and self-distrust, yea, this should not beat us off: yet, it is most fit to put us on to trust in Him who is our strength. Courage! the day shall be ours. Though we may be often foiled and down, and sometimes almost at a hopeless point, yet, our *Head* is on high. He hath conquered for us, and shall conquer in us. Therefore, so fear as not to fear. *Why should I fear in the days of evil*, says the psalmist, *when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?* Psalm xlix. 5. (Which I take is some grievous affliction, and that with a visage of punishment of sin: guiltiness is to be read in it, yet does he not fear.) If I *trusted in wealth*, and *boastsd myself in the multitude of riches*, then that being in hazard, I must fear: leaning on that, it failing, I might fall. But this is my confidence (ver. 15), *God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for he shall receive me.* Wealth can not, but he can. It *buys* not a man out from his hand, but he *buys*, from *the hand of the grave;* so the word is. For the visible heavens even in their fall, and the dissolution of nature, would not affright a believer, *Si fractus illabatur orbis*, &c.

Alas! most persons have dull or dim apprehensions and shallow impressions of God; therefore they have little either of this *fear* or of this *trust*. God is not in all their thoughts, but how to compass this or that design, and if they miss one, then how to compass another: they are cast from one wave upon another. And if at any time they attain their purpose, they find it but a wind, a handful of nothing, far from what they fancied it.

Oh, my brethren, my desire is, that the faces of your souls were but once turned about, that they were toward him, looking to him, continually fearing him, delighting, trusting in him, making him your all. Can anything so elevate and ennoble the spirit of a man, as to contemplate and converse with the pure, ever-blessed spring and Father of spirits? Beg that you may know him, that he would

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reveal himself to you; for otherwise, no teaching can make him known. It is to light candles to seek the sun, to think to attain to this knowledge without his own revealing it. If he hide his face, who then may behold him? Pray for this quickening knowledge, such a knowledge as will effectually work this happy *fear* and *trust*.

You who have attained anything of it, desire and *follow on to know the Lord*; particularly, so that your hearts may repose on him. So fear that you may not fear. He would have our spirits calm and quiet; for when they are in a hurry and confusion, they are then fit for nothing: all within makes a jarring, unpleasant noise, as of an instrument quite out of tune.

This fear of God is not, you see, a perplexing doubting and distrust of his love: on the contrary, it is a fixed resting and trust on his love.

Many who have some truth of grace, are, through weakness, filled with disquieting fears; but possibly, though they perceive it not, it may be in some, a point of wilfulness, a little latent, undiscerned affectation of scrupling and doubting, placing much of religion in it. True, where the soul is really solicitous about its interest in God, that argues some grace; but being vexingly anxious about it, argues that grace is low and weak. A spark there is, even discovered by that smoke; but the great smoke still continuing, and nothing seen but it, argues there is little fire, little faith, little love.

And this, as it is unpleasant to thyself, so is it to God, as smoke to the eyes. What if one should be always questioning with his friend, whether he loved him or not, and upon every little occasion were ready to think he doth not, how would this disrelish their society together, though truly loving each other! The far more excellent way, and more pleasing both to ourselves and to God, were to resolve on humble trust, reverence, and confidence, being most afraid to offend, delighting to walk in his ways, loving him and his will in all, and then, resting persuaded of his love, though he chastise us. And even though we offend him, and see our offences in our chastisements, yet he is good, *plenteous in redemption*, ready to forgive; therefore *let Israel trust and hope*. Psalm cxxx. 7. Let my soul roll itself on him, and adventure there all its weight. He bears greater matters, upholding the frame of heaven and earth, and is not troubled nor burdened with it.

The heart of a man is not sufficient for self-support; therefore, naturally, it seeks out some other thing to lean and rest itself on. The unhappiness is, for the most part, that it seeks to things below itself; but these, being both so mean and so uncertain, can not be a firm and certain stay to it. These things are not fixed themselves: how can they then fix the heart? Can a man have firm footing on a quagmire, or moving sands? Therefore, men are forced in these things, still to shift their seat, and seek about from one to another, still rolling and unsettled. The believer only hath this advantage; he hath a rest high enough and sure enough, out of the reach of all hazards. *His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.*

The basis of this happiness is, *He trusteth in the Lord.* So the *heart is fixed;* and so fixed, it *fears no ill tidings.*

This *trust* is grounded on the word of God, revealing the power and all-sufficiency of God, and withal his goodness, his offer of himself to be the stay of souls, his commanding us to rest on him. People wait on I know not what persuasions and assurances, but I know no other to build faith on, than the word of promise, the truth and faithfulness of God opened up, his wisdom, and power, and goodness, as the stay of all those who, renouncing all other props, will venture on it, and lay all upon him *He that believes, sets to his seal that God is true*, John iii. 33, and so, he is sealed for God; his portion and interest are secured. *If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.* Isa. vii. 9.

This is the way to have peace and assurance which many look for first, *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.* Isa. xxvi. 3. So here, the heart is fixed by *trusting.*

Seek, then, clearer apprehensions of the faithfulness and goodness of God, hearts more enlarged in the notion of free grace, and the absolute trust due to it; thus shall they be more established and fixed in all the rollings and changes of the world.

*His heart is fixed*, or *prepared*, ready-dressed and in arms for all services, resolved not to give back, able to meet all adventures, and stand its ground. God is unchangeable, and therefore faith is invincible. That sets the heart on him, fastens it there on the rock of eternity; then, let winds blow, and storms arise, it cares not.

This firm and close cleaving unto God hath in it of the affection which is inseparable from this trust, *love*, joined with *faith*, and so, a hatred of all ways and thoughts that alienate and estrange from God, that remove and unsettle the heart. The holiest, wariest heart is surely the most believing and fixed heart If a believer will adventure on any way of sin, he shall find that it will unfix him, and shake his confidence, more than ten thousand hazards and assaults from without. These are so far from moving, that they settle and fix the heart commonly more, causing it to cleave the closer and nearer unto God; but sinful liberty breeds disquiet, and disturbs all. Where sin is, there will be a storm: the wind within the bowels of the earth, makes the earthquake.

Would you be quiet, and have peace within in troublous times? keep near unto God, beware of anything that may interpose between you and your confidence. *It is good for me*, says the psalmist, *to be near God:* not only



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to draw near, but to keep near, to cleave to him, and dwell in him: so the word imports. Oh, the sweet calm of such a soul amidst all storms! Thus, once trusting and fixed, then no more fear: he is *not afraid of evil tidings*, not of any *ill-hearing*. Whatsoever sound is terrible in the ears of men, the noise of war, news of death, or even the sound of the trumpet in the last judgment, he hears all this undisquieted. Nothing is unexpected. Being once fixed on God, then the heart may put cases to itself, and suppose all things imaginable, the most terrible, and look for them; not trouble before trouble comes, with dark and dismal apprehensions, but satisfied in a quiet, unmoved expectation of the hardest things. Whatsoever it is, though particularly not thought on before, yet the heart is not afraid of the news of it, because it is *fixed, trusting on the Lord*. Nothing can shake that foundation, nor dissolve that union; therefore, no fear. Yea, this assurance stays the heart in all things, how strange and unforeseen soever to it. All are foreseen to my God on whom I trust, yea are forecontrived and ordered by him. This is the impregnable fortress of a soul. All is at the disposal and command of my God; my Father rules all: what need I fear?

Every one trusts to somewhat. As for honor, and esteem, and popularity, they are airy, vain things; but riches seem a more solid work and fence, yet they are but a tower in conceit, not really. Prov. xviii. 11. *The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as a high wall in his own conceit.* But (ver. 10), *the name of the Lord is a strong tower*, indeed. This is the thing that all seek, some *fence* and *fixing;* here it is. We call you not to vexation and turmoil, but *from* it, and, as St. Paul said, *Whom ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.* Ye blindly and fruitlessly seek after the *show*. The true aiming at this fixedness of mind will secure that, though they fall short, yet, by the way they will light on very pretty things that have some virtue in them, as they that seek the philosopher's stone. But the believer hath the *thing*, the secret itself of tranquillity and joy, and this turns all into gold, their iron chains into a crown of gold: *While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.* 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

This is the blessed and safe estate of believers. Who can think they have a sad, heavy life? Oh! it is the only lightsome, sweet, cheerful condition in the world. The rest of men are poor, rolling, unstayed things, every report shaking them, as the leaves of trees are shaken with the wind; yea, lighter than so, as the chaff that the wind drives to and fro at its pleasure. Isa. vii. 2; Psalm i. 4. Would men but reflect and look in upon their own hearts, it is a wonder what vain, childish things the most would find there, glad and sorry at things as light as the toys of children, at which they laugh and cry in a breath. How easily is the heart puffed up with a thing or a word that pleaseth us, bladder-like, swelled with a little air, and it shrinks again in discouragements and fear, upon the touch of a needle's point, which gives that air some vent.

What is the life of the greatest part but a continual tossing between vain hopes and fears? All their days are spent in these. Oh! how vain a thing is a man even in his best estate, while he is nothing but himself —while his heart is not united and fixed on God, and he is disquieted in vain. How small a thing will do it! He needs no other than his own heart; it may prove disquietment enough to itself: his thoughts are his tormentors.

I know some men are, by a stronger understanding and by moral principles, somewhat raised above the vulgar, and speak big of a constancy of mind; but these are but flourishes, an acted bravery. Somewhat there may be that will hold out in some trials, but it will fall far short of this fixedness of faith. Troubles may so multiply, as to drive them at length from their posture, and may come on so thick, with such violent blows, as will smite them out of their artificial guard, disorder all their Seneca and Epictetus, and all their own calm thoughts and high resolves. The approach of death, though they make a good mien, and set the best face on it, or if not, yet, some kind of terror, may seize on their spirits, which they are not able to shift off. But the soul trusting on God, is prepared for all, not only for the calamities of war, pestilence, famine, poverty, or death, but when in the saddest apprehensions of the soul beyond hope, believes against hope; even in the darkest night, casts anchor in God, reposes on him when he sees no light. Isa. l. 10 *Yea, though he slay me*, says Job, *yet will I trust on him*—not merely, though I die, but, though *he* slay me: when I see his hand lifted up to destroy me, yet, from that same hand will I look for salvation.

My brethren, my desire is, to stir up in your hearts an ambition after this blessed estate of the godly who fear the Lord, and trust in him, and so fear no other thing. The common revolutions and changes of the world, and those which in these late times we ourselves have seen, and the likelihood of more and greater coming on, seem dreadful to weak minds. But let these persuade us the more to prize and seek this fixed, unaffrighted station: there is no fixing but here.

Oh! that you would be persuaded to break off from the vile ways of sin, which debase the soul and fill it full of terrors, and to disengage them from the vanities of this world, to take up in God, to live in him wholly, to cleave to and depend on him, to esteem nothing beside him! Excellent was the answer of that holy man to the emperor, on his first essaying him with large proffers of honor and riches to draw him from Christ: *Offer these*

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*things* (says he) *to children, I regard them not.* Then after he had tried to terrify him with threatening: *Threaten* (says he) *your effeminate courtiers, I fear none of these things.*

Seek to have your hearts established on him by the faith of eternal life, and then it will be ashamed to distrust him in any other thing. Yea, truly, you will not much regard, nor be careful for other things how they be. It will be all one, the better and the worse of this *moment;* the things of it, even the greatest, being both in themselves so little and worthless, and of so short continuance.

Well, choose you; but all reckoned and examined, I had rather be the poorest believer than the greatest king on earth. How small a commotion, small in its beginning, may prove the overturning of the greatest kingdom! But the believer is heir to a kingdom that can not be shaken. The mightiest and most victorious prince, who hath not only lost nothing, but hath been gaining new conquests all his days, is stopped by a small distemper in the middle of his course; he returns to his dust, and then his vast designs fall to nothing. *In that very day his thoughts perish.* But the believer, in that very day, is sent to the possession of his crown: that is his coronation-day; all *his* thoughts are accomplished.

How can you affright him? Bring him word that his estate is ruined. "*Yet, my inheritance is safe,*" says he. "Your wife, or child, or dear friend, is dead."—"*Yet my Father lives.*"—"You yourself must die."—"Well, then, *I go home to my Father, and to my inheritance.*"

For the public troubles of the church, doubtless, it is both a pious and a generous temper, to be more deeply affected for these than for all our private ones: and to be alive to the common calamities of any people, but especially of God's own people, hath been the character of men near unto him. Observe the pathetical strains of the prophets' bewailing, when they foretell the desolation even of foreign kingdoms, much more when foretelling that of the Lord's chosen people; they are still mindful of Sion, and mournful for her distresses. See Jer. ix. 1, and the whole book of Lamentations. So the psalmist: *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,* &c. Psalm cxxxvii. 5. Pious spirits are always public-spirited, as even brave heathens were for the commonwealth. So he, in that passage of Horace:* "Little regarding himself, but much solicitous for the public." Yet even in this, with much compassion, there is a calm in a believer's mind. How these agree, none can tell but they who feel it. He finds amid all sad news, yet still *a fixed heart, trusting,* satisfied in this, that deliverance shall come in due time (Psalm cii. 13), and that in those judgments that are inflicted, man shall be humbled and God exalted (Isa. ii. 11; v. 16), and that in all tumults, and changes and subversions of states, still, his throne is fixed, and with that the believer's heart likewise. So Psalm xxix. 10: *The Lord sitteth upon the flood: yea, the Lord sitteth king for ever.* Or, *sat in the flood,* possibly referring to the general deluge; yet, then, God sat quiet, and still *sitteth king for ever.* He steered the ark, and still guides his church through all. So Psalm xlvi., throughout that whole Psalm. In all commotions, the kingdom of Christ shall be spreading and growing, and the close of all shall be full victory on his side: and that is sufficient for the believer.

Of this, a singular example is in Job, who was not daunted with so many ill-hearings, but stood as an unmoved rock amid the winds and waves: *Ille velut rupes immota manebat.*

In this condition there is so much sweetness that, if known, a man might suspect himself to be rather selfishly taken with it, than to be purely loving God. Such joy in believing, or at least such peace, such a serene calmness, is in no other thing in this world. Nothing either without or within a man is to be named with this trusting on his *goodness,* who is God, and on his *faithfulness,* who, giving his promise for thy warrant, commands thee to rely on him. The holy soul still trusts under the darkest apprehensions. If it is suggested that thou art a reprobate, yet will the soul say, "I will see the utmost, and hang by the hold I have, till I feel myself really cast off, and will not willingly fall off. If I must be separated from him, he shall do it himself; he shall shake me off while I would cleave to him. Yea, to the utmost, I will look for mercy, and will hope better: though I found him shaking me off, yet will I think he will not do it." It is good to seek after all possible assurance, but not to fret at the want of it; for even without those assurances which some Christians hang too much upon, there is in simple trust and reliance on God, and in a desire to walk in his ways, such a fortress of peace, as all the assaults in the world are not able to make a breach in. And to this add that unspeakable delight in walking in his fear, joined with this trust. The noble ambition of pleasing him, makes one careless of pleasing or displeasing all the world. Besides, the delight in his commandments, in so pure, so just a law, holiness, victory over lusts, and temperance, hath a sweetness in it that presently pays itself, because it is agreeable to his will.

It is the godly man alone, who, by this fixed consideration in God, looks the grim visage of death in the face with an unappalled mind, which damps all the joys, and defeats all the hopes of the most prosperous, proudest, and wisest worldlings. As Archimedes said, when shot, *Avocásti ab optima demonstratione,* so it spoils all their figures and fine devices. *But*

* Invenit insomni volventem publica curâ
Fata virûm, casusque urbis, cunctisque timentem,
Securumque sui.

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*to the righteous, there is hope in his death.* He goes through it without fear, without Caligula's *Quò vadis.* Though riches, honors, and all the glories of this world, are with a man, yet he fears; yea, he fears the more for these, because here they must end. But the good man looks death out of countenance, in the words of David, *Though I walk through the valley and shadow of death, yet will I fear no evil, for thou art with me.* Psalm xxiii. 4.

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## SERMON XIII.

### THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

MATT. xiii. 3.

And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold a sower went forth to sow.

THE rich bounty of God hath furnished our natural life, not barely for strict necessity, but with great abundance: many kinds of beasts, and fowls, and fishes, and herbs, and fruits, has he provided for the use of man. Thus our spiritual life likewise is supported with a variety: the word, the food of it, hath not only all necessary truths once simply set down, but a great variety of doctrine for our more abundant instruction and consolation. Among the rest, this way of similitudes hath a notable commixture of profit and delight.

Parables not unfolded and understood, are a veil (as here) to the multitude; and in that view, they are a great judgment (as Isa. vi. 9, cited here): but when cleared and made transparent, then they are a glass to behold Divine things in more commodiously and suitably to our way. All things are big with such resemblances, but they require the dexterous hand of an active spirit to bring them forth. This way, beside other advantages, is much graced and commended by our Savior's frequent use of it.

That which is given here, is fitted to the occasion: multitudes were coming to hear him, and many were not a whit the better for it. He instructs us in this point, the great difference between the different hearts of men, so that the same word hath very different success in them.

In this parable we shall consider these three things: 1. The nature of the word itself. 2. The sameness and commonness of the dispensation. 3. The difference of the operation and production.

The word, the *seed*, hath in it a productive virtue to bring forth fruit according to its kind, that is, the fruit of a *new life;* not only a new habitude and fashion of life without, but a new nature, a new kind of life within, new thoughts, a new estimate of things, new delights and actions. When the word reveals God, his greatness and holiness, then it begets pious fear and reverence, and study of conformity to him. When it reveals his goodness and mercy, it works love and confidence. When it holds up to our view Christ crucified, it crucifies the soul to the world, and the world to it. When it represents those rich things which are laid up for us, that blessed inheritance of the saints, then it makes all the lustre of this world vanish, shows how poor it is, weans and calls off the heart from them, raising it to those higher hopes, and sets it on the project of a crown. And so it is a seed of noble thoughts and of a suitable behavior in a Christian, as in the exposition of this parable, as it is called the *word of the kingdom; seed,* an *immortal seed,* as St. Peter calls it, 1 Peter i. 23, springing up to no less than eternal life.

This teaches us, 1. Highly to esteem the great goodness of God to those places and times which have been most blessed with it. *He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments, they have not known them.* Psalm cxlvii. 19.

2. That the same dispensation is to be preached indifferently to all where it comes, as far as the sound can reach. And thus it was very much extended in the first promulgating of the gospel; *their sound went out through all the earth,* as the apostle allusively applies that of the psalmist. Romans x. 18; Psalm xix. 4.

3. This teaches also ministers liberally to sow this seed at all times, according to that, *In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand,* &c. (Eccl. xi. 6), praying earnestly to him who is the Lord, not only of the harvest, but of the seedtime, and of this *seed,* to make it fruitful. This is his peculiar work. So the apostle acknowledges, *I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.* 1 Cor. iii. 6.

4. Hence we also learn the success to be very different. This is most evident in men: while one is cast into the mould and fashion of the word, and so moulded and fashioned by it, another is no whit changed; while one heart is melting before it, another is still hardened under it.

So, then, this is not all, to have the word and to hear it, as if that would serve our turn and save us, as we commonly fancy, *The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we.* Multitudes under the continual sound of the word, yet remain lifeless and fruitless, and die in their sins. Therefore, we must inquire and examine strictly, what becomes of it, how it works, what it brings forth; and for this very end, this parable declares so many are fruitless. We need not press them, they are three to one here; yea, that were too narrow, the odds is far greater, for these are but the kinds of unfruitful grounds, and under each of these are comprised huge multitudes of individuals, so that there may be a hundred to one, and it is to be feared that in many congregations it is more than so.

Whence is then the difference? Not from

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the seed; that is the same to all. Not from the sower neither, for though these be divers, and of different abilities, yet it hangs little or nothing on that. Indeed, he is the fittest to preach, who is himself most like his message, and comes forth not only with a handful of this seed in his hand, but with store of it in his heart, the word *dwelling richly in him;* yet, howsoever, the seed he sows, being this word of life, depends not on his qualifications in any kind, either of common gifts, or special grace. People mistake this much, and it is a carnal conceit to hang on the advantages of the minister, or to eye that much. The sure way is, to look up to God, and to look into thine own heart. An unchanged, unsoftened heart, like an evil soil, disappoints the fruit. What though sown by a weak hand, yea, possibly a foul one, yet if received into a clean and honest heart, it will fructify much. There is in the world a needless and prejudicial distinguishing of men, out of which people will not come, for all we can say.

The first bad ground is a *highway*. Now we have a commentary here, whence we may not, and will not depart: it is authentic and full. It is those who hear the word and *understand it not*. Ver. 19. Gross, brutish spirits, who perceive not what is said, are as if they were not there, sit like blocks, one log of wood upon another; as he said, *Lapis super lapidem in theatro*. This is our brutish multitude. What pity is it to see so many, such as have not so much as a natural apprehension of spiritual truths! Their hearts are the *common road* of all passengers, of all kinds of foolish, brutish thoughts; seeking nothing but how to live, and yet they know not to what end, have no design; trivial, *highway* hearts, which all temptations pass through at their pleasure; *profane as Esau*, which some critics draw from a word signifying the *threshold*, the outer step that every foul foot treads on.

These retain nothing; there is no hazard of that; and yet, the enemy of souls, to make all sure, lest peradventure some word might take root unawares, some grain of this seed, is busy to pick it away; to take them off from all reflection, all serious thoughts, or the remembrance of anything spoken to them. And if any common word is remembered, yet it doth no good, for that is trodden down like the rest; though the most is picked up, because it lies on the road. So it is expressed, Mark iv. 4.

The second is *stony ground;* hard hearts, not softened and made penetrable to receive in deeply this ingrafted word with meekness, with humble yielding and submission to it; *the rocks*. Yet, in these, there is often some receiving of it, and a little slender moisture above them, which the warm air may make spring up a little; they *receive with joy*, have a little present delight in it, are moved and taken with the sermon, possibly even to the shedding of some tears: but the misery is, there is want of depth of earth, it sinks not.

No wonder if there is some present delight in these. Therefore, the *word of the kingdom*, especially if skilfully and sensibly delivered by some more able speaker, pleases. Let it be but a fancy, yet it is a fine pleasant one; such love as induced the Son of God to die for sinners; such a rich purchase made as a kingdom; such glory and sweetness. Therefore the description of the new Jerusalem, Rev. xxi., suppose it to be but a dream, or one of the visions of the night, yet it is passing fine; it must needs please a mind that heeds what is said of it. There is a *natural* delight in spiritual things, and thus the word of the prophet, as the Lord tells him (Ezek. xxxiii. 32), was as a minstrel's voice, a fine song so long as it lasted, but which dies out in the air. It may be, the relish and air of it will remain awhile in the imagination, but not long; even that wears out and is forgotten. So here, it is *heard with joy*, and some is *springing up* presently: they commend it, and, it may be, repeat some passages, yea, possibly desire to be like it, to have such and such graces as are recommended, and upon that think they have them, are presently good Christians in their own conceit. And to appearance, some change is wrought, and it appears to be all that it is; but it is not deep enough. They talk, possibly, too much, more than those whose hearts receive it more deeply: there it lies hid longer, and little is heard of it; others may think it is lost, and, possibly, themselves do not perceive that it is there; they are exercised and humbled at it, and find no good in their own hearts; yet, there it is hid; as David says, *Thy word have I hid in my heart*. And as seed in a manner dies in a silent, smothering way, yet, it is in order to the fructifying and the reviving of it, so it will spring up in time, and be *fruitful* in its season—*with patience*, as St. Luke hath it of the good ground; not so suddenly, but much more surely and solidly.

But the most are present mushroom Christians, soon ripe, soon rotten. The seed goes never deep: it springs up indeed, but anything blasts and withers it. There is little root in some. If trials arise, either the heat of *persecution* without, or a *temptation* within, this sudden spring-seed can stand before neither.

Oh, rocky hearts! How shallow, shallow, are the impressions of Divine things upon you! Religion goes never farther than the upper surface of your hearts. You have but few deep thoughts of God, and of Jesus Christ, and the things of the world to come; all are but slight and transient glances.

The third is, *thorny ground*. This relates to the cares, and pleasures, and all the interests of this life. See Mark iv. 1; and Luke viii. 5. All these together are the *thorns*. And these grow in hearts which do more deeply receive the seed, and send it forth, and and in which it springs up more hopefully

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than in either of the other two, and yet they choke it. Oh, the pity!

Many are thus almost at heaven; there is so much desire of renovation, and some endeavors after it, and yet, the thorns prevail. Miserable thorns, the base things of a perishing life, drawing away the strength of affections, sucking the sap of the soul! Our other seed and harvest, our corn and hay, our shops and ships, our tradings and bargains, our suits and pretensions for places and employments of gain or credit, husband or wife, and children, and house, and train, our feastings and entertainments, and other pleasures of sense, our civilities and compliments, and a world of those in all the world, are these *thorns*, and they overspread all: *the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.*

And for how long is all the advantage and delight of these? Alas! that so poor things should prejudice us against the rich and blessed increase of this divine seed!

The last is, *good ground, a good and honest heart.* There is not much fineness here, not many questions and disputes, but honest simplicity, sweet sincerity, that is all; an humble, single desire to eye and to do the will of God, and this from love to himself. This makes the soul abound in the *fruits* of holiness, receiving the word as the ground of it. Different degrees there are indeed, *some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred fold;* yet, the lowest are aiming at the highest, not resting satisfied, still growing more fruitful; if thirty last year, desiring to bring forth sixty this.

This is the great point, and we ought to examine it; for much is sown and little brought forth. Our God hath done much for us; (what more could be done?) yet, when grapes were expected, wild grapes are produced. What becomes of all? Who grow to be more spiritual, more humble and meek, more like Christ, more self-denying, fuller of love to God and one to another? Some, but alas! how few. All the land is sown, and that plentifully, with the good seed; but what comes for the most part? Cockle, and no grain. *Infelix lolium.*

We would do all other things to purpose, and not willingly lose our end: we would not trade and gain nothing, buy and sell, and live by the loss; we would not plough and sow, and reap nothing. How sensibly do we feel one ill year! And shall *this* alone be lost labor which, well improved, were worth all the rest? Oh! how much more worth than all! Shall we do only the greatest business to the least purpose? Bethink yourselves, what do we here? Why come we here? If we still remain as proud and passionate, as self-willed as before, what will all great bargains, and good years, and full barns, avail within a while? That word, *Thou fool, this night shall they fetch away thy soul,* how terrible will it be!

We think we are wise in not losing our labor in other things; why, it is all lost, even where most is gained. What amounts it to, when cast up? *Vanity and vexation of spirit,* is the total sum. And in all our projecting and bustling, what do we but *sow the wind,* and *reap the whirlwind,* sow *vanity* and reap *vexation?*

This seed alone, being fruitful, makes rich and happy, springs up to *eternal life!* Oh: that we were wise, that we would at length learn to hear every sermon as on the utmost edge of time, at the very brink of eternity! For anything we know for ourselves, of any of us it may be really so. However, it is wise and safe to do it as if it were so. Will you be persuaded of this? It were a happy sermon, if it could prevail for the more fruitful hearing of all the rest henceforward. We have lost too much of our little time; and thus, with the apostle, *I beseech you, I beseech you, receive not the grace of God in vain.*

Now, that you may be fruitful, examine well your own hearts: pluck up, weed out, for there are still thorns. Some will grow, but he is the happiest man who hath the sharpest eye and the busiest hand, spying them out, and plucking them up. *Take heed how ye hear;* think it not so easy a matter. *Plough up, and sow not among thorns.* Jeremiah iv. 3.

And above all, pray, pray before, after, and in hearing. Dart up desires to God. He is the Lord of the harvest, whose influence doth all. The difference of the soil makes indeed the difference of success: but the Lord hath the privilege of bettering the soil. He who framed the heart changes it when and how he will. There is a curse on all grounds naturally, which fell on the earth for man's sake, but fell more on the ground of man's own heart within him: *Thorns and briers shalt thou bring forth.* Now it is He that denounceth that curse, who alone hath power to remove it. He is both sovereign owner of the seed, and the changer of the soil; he turns a wilderness into Carmel by his Spirit; and no ground, no heart, can be good, till he change it.

And being changed, much care must be had still in manuring; for still that is in it, which will bring forth many weeds, is a mother to them, and but a step-mother to this seed. Therefore,

Consider it, if you think this concerns you. *He that hath an ear to hear,* as our Savior closes, *let him hear.* The Lord apply your hearts to this work; and though discouragements should arise without, or within, and little present fruit appear, but corruption is rather stronger and greater, yet, watch, and pray. Wait on; it shall be better. This fruit is to be brought forth *with patience,* as St. Luke hath it. And this *seed,* this *word,* the Lord calls by that very name, the very *word of his patience.* Keep it, hide it in thy

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heart, and in due time it shall spring up. And this patience shall be put to it but for a little while. The day of harvest is at hand, when all who have been in any measure fruitful in grace, shall be gathered into glory.

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## SERMON XIV.

### HOLINESS.

### 2 Cor. vii. 1.

**Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**

It is a thing both of unspeakable sweetness and usefulness, for a Christian often to consider the excellency of that estate to which he is called. It can not fail to put him upon very high resolutions, and carry him on in the divine ambition of behaving daily more suitably to his high calling and hopes. Therefore, these are often set before Christians in the Scriptures, and are pressed here by the apostle upon a particular occasion, the avoidance of near combinements with unbelievers. He mentions some choice promises which God makes to his own people, and speaks of their near relation to, and communion with, himself; and upon these, he enlarges and raises the exhortation to the universal endeavor of all holiness, and that as aiming at the very top and highest degree of it.

In the words are, I. The thing to which he would persuade. II. The motive.

I. The thing is, *holiness* in its full extension and intention. *Purging ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit*, and *perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

The purging out of filthiness, and the perfecting of holiness, express those two parts of renewing grace, *mortification* and *vivification*, as usually they are distinguished. But I conceive they are not so truly different parts, as a different notion of the same thing, the decrease of sin and the increase of grace, being truly one thing, as are the dispelling of darkness and the augmenting of light. So here, the one is rendered as the necessary result, yea, as the equivalent of the other, as the same thing indeed: *purging from filthiness*, and, in so doing, *perfecting holiness; perfecting holiness*, and, in so doing, *purging from filthiness.* By *perfection* is meant a growing, progressive advance toward perfection.

The words, without straining, give us as it were the several dimensions of holiness. The *breadth—cleansing from all filthiness;* the *length*, parallel to man's composition, running all along through his soul and body—from all *filthiness of the flesh and spirit;* the *height—perfecting holiness;* the *depth*, that which is the bottom whence it rises up—a deep impress of the fear of God, *perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

*Let us cleanse ourselves.*] It is the Lord who is the sanctifier of his people; he *purges away their dross and tin*, he *pours clean water*, acording to his promises; yet, doth he call to us to cleanse ourselves. Even, *having such promises, let us cleanse ourselves.* He puts a new life into us, and causes us to act, and excites us to excite it and call it up into act in the progress of sanctification. Men are strangely inclined to a perverse construction of things. Tell them that we are to act and work, and to *give all diligence*, then they would fancy a doing in their own strength, and be their own saviors. Again, tell them that God works all our works in us, and for us, then they would take the ease of doing nothing; if they can not have the praise of doing all, they will sit still with folded hands, and use no diligence at all. But this is the corrupt logic of the flesh, its base sophistry. The apostle reasons just contrary, Phil. ii. 12: *It is God that worketh in you both to will and do;—therefore*, would a carnal heart say, we need not work, or at least, may work very carelessly. But *he* infers, *Therefore let us work out our own salvation with fear and trembling*, that is, in the more humble obedience to God, and dependance on him; not obstructing the influence of his grace, and by sloth and negligence provoking him to withdraw or abate it. Certainly, many in whom there is *truth* of grace, are kept low in the *growth* of it, by their own slothfulness, sitting still, and not bestirring themselves, and exercising the proper actions of that spiritual life by which it is entertained and advances.

*From all filthiness.*] All kinds of sinful pollutions. Not as men commonly do, reform some things, and take to themselves dispensations in others, at least in some *one* peculiar sin, their *mistress*, their *Herodias*, or their *Delilah:* no parting with that; yea, they rather forego many other things, as a kind of composition for the retaining of it.

*Of flesh and spirit.*] The *whole* man must be purified and consecrated to God; not only refined from the gross outward acts of sin, but from the inward affection to it, and from the secret motions of it, that so the heart, *like a weaned child* (Psalm cxxxi. 2), go not after it, which when restrained from the outward commission of sin, it may do, and very often does; as the Israelites *lusted after the flesh pots*, their hearts remained in Egypt still, though their bodies were brought out. This, then, is to be done; affection to sin is to be purged out. That is, we are to cleanse the *ground;* not only to lop off the branches, but to dig about, and loosen and pluck up the root. Though still fibres of it will stick, yet we ought still to be finding them out, and plucking them up.

Further, this applies not only to the inner part of all sins, but to some sins that are almost wholly inward, that hang not so much on the body, nor are acted by it; *those filthinesses of the spirit* which are less easily dis-

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cerned than those of the flesh, and, as more hardly discerned, so, when discerned, more hardly purged out: *pride, self-love, unbelief, curiosity*, &c., which, though more retired and refined sins, yet are pollutions and defilements, yea, of the worst sort, as being more spiritual, *filthiness of the spirit*. Fleshly pollutions are things of which the devils are not capable in themselves, though they excite men to them, and so they are called unclean spirits. But the highest rank of sins, are those that are properly *spiritual wickednesses*. These in men are the chief strengths of Satan, the inner works of his forts, and *strong-holds*. 2 Corinthians x. 4. Many who are not much tempted to the common gross sensualities, who have, possibly, though inclination to them, yet, a kind of disdain of them, and through education, and morality, and strength of reason, with somewhat of natural conscience, are carried above them, yet, have many of those *heights* the apostle speaks of, those lofty *imaginations* that rise against God and *the obedience of Christ*, all which must be demolished.

*Perfecting holiness.*] Not content with low measures, with just so much as keeps from hell, but aspiring toward perfection; aiming high at self-victory, self-denial, and the love of God becoming purer and hotter, like a fire, growing, and flaming up, and consuming the earth. Though men fall short of their aim, yet it is good to aim high: they shall shoot so much the higher, though not full so high as they aim. Thus we ought to be setting the state of perfection in our eye, resolving not to rest content below that, and to come as near it as we can, even before we come at it. *Not as though I had already attained*, says the apostle, *but this one thing I do; forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, I press toward the mark*. Phil. iii. 11, 12. This is to act as one who hath such a hope, such a state in view, and is still advancing toward it.

*In the fear of God.*] There is no working but on firm ground; there are no solid endeavors in holiness where it is not founded in a deeply-felt reverence of God, a desire to please him and to be like him, which springs from love. This most men are either wholly strangers to, or are but slight and shallow in it, and therefore make so little true progress in holiness.

II. Then there is the motive. *Having these promises.* Being called to so fair an estate, so excellent a condition, to be the people, yea, the sons and daughters of God, therefore they are called to the *coming forth* from *Babel*, and the separating themselves from sin, and purging it out. Holiness is his image in his children; the more there is of it, the more suitable are they to that blessed relation and dignity, and the firmer are their hopes of the inheritance of glory.

Consider sin as a filthiness: hate it. Oh, how ugly and vile is lust, how deformed is swelling pride! And all sin is an aversion from God, a casting of the noble soul into the mire, the defacing of all its beauty. Turning to present things, it pollutes itself with them: he who is *clad in scarlet, embraces the dunghill*, as Jeremiah in another sense laments.

The purity of things is, an *unmixture* and *simplicity* corresponding with their own being; and such is the purity of the soul when elevated above the earth and sense, and united unto God, contemplating him, and delighting in him. All inordinate bent to the creatures, or to itself (which is the first and main disorder), doth defile and debase it. And the more it is sublimed and freed from itself, the purer and more heavenly it grows, and partakes the more of God, and resembles him the more.

This, then, is to be our main study; first, to search out our iniquities, the particular defilements of our nature; not only gross filthiness, drunkenness, lasciviousness, &c., but our love of this earth, or of *air*, our vanity of mind, our self-will and self-seeking. Most persons, even most Christians, are short-sighted in respect to their own secret evils, the *filthiness of the spirit* especially, and use little diligence in this inquiry. They do not seek light from God, to go in before him, and to lead them into themselves, as the prophet had in the discovery of idolatries at Jerusalem. Oh! that we could once see what heaps of abominations lie hid in us, one behind another!

Then, having searched out, we must follow on to purge out: we are not to pass over, nor to spare any, but to delight most in casting out the best beloved sin, the choicest idol, that hath had most of our service and sacrifices, to make room for Jesus Christ.

And never cease in this work, for still there is need of more purifying. One day's work in this, disposes for, and engages to a further, to the next; for, as sin is purged out, light comes in, and more clear discoveries are made of remaining pollutions. So, then, still there must be progress, less of the world, and more of God in the heart every day. Oh! this is a sweet course of life. What gain, what preferment is to be compared to it?

And in this, it is good to have our ambition growing; the higher we rise, to aspire still the higher, looking further than before, even toward the perfection of holiness. It is not much we can here attain to, but surely, it is commonly far less than we might; we improve not our condition and advantages as we might do. The world are busy driving forward their designs. Men of spirit are animated both by better and by worse success: if anything miscarry, it sets them on the more eagerly to make it up, in the right management of some other design: and when they prosper in one thing, that enables and encourages them to attempt further. Shall all other things seem worth our pains? Are only grace and glory so cheap in our account,

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that the least diligence of all goes that way? Oh, strange delusion!

Now, our cleansing is to be managed by all holy means: the *word* and *sacrament* more wisely and spiritually used than commonly they are with us; and *private prayer*, which purifies and elevates the soul, takes it up into the mount, and makes it shine; and particularly, supplicating for the Spirit of holiness and for victory over sin, is not in vain; —the soul obtains its desires of God, becoming that which it is fixedly set upon; *holy resolution*;—Christians are much wanting in this, are faint and loose in their purposes; —the *consideration of Divine truths*, the mysteries of the kingdom, the hope of Christians, yea, rich and great promises, that is particularly here the motive: these are all the means, and holy means they are, as their end is, the perfection of holiness.

*Having these promises.*] Now consider whether it is better to be the slaves of Satan, or the sons of God. Measure delight in God, with the low, base pleasures of sense. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*: these gradually go on together, and are perfected together.

Why, then, is there such an invincible love of sin in the hearts of men? At least, why so little love of holiness, and endeavor after it, so mean thoughts of it, as a thing either indecent or unpleasant, when it is the only noble and the only delightful thing in the world? The soul by other things is drawn below itself, but by holiness it is raised above itself, and made divine. The pleasures of sin are for a season: they are the pleasures of a moment exchanged for those of eternity. But even in the mean time, in this season, the holy soul is fed with communion with God, one hour of which is of more worth than the longest life of the highest of the world's delights.

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## SERMON XV.

### GRACE AND OBEDIENCE.

### PSALM CXIX. 32.

**I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.**

To desire ease and happiness, under a general representation of it, is a thing of more easy and general persuasion; there is somewhat in nature to help the argument. But to find beauty in, and be taken with, the very *way* of holiness that leads to it, is more rare, and depends on a higher principle. *Self-love* inclines a man to desire the *rest of love*, but to love and desire *the labor of love*, is love of a higher and purer strain. To delight and be cheerful in obedience, argues much love as the spring of it. That is the thing the holy psalmist doth so plentifully express in this Psalm, and he is still desiring more of that sweet and lively affection that might make him yet more abundant in action. Thus here, *I will run*, &c. He presents his desire and his purpose together, *q. d.*, The more of this grace thou bestowest on me, the more service shall I be able to do thee.

This is the top of his ambition, while others are seeking to enlarge their barns, their lands or estates, or their titles; and kings to enlarge their territories or authority, to encroach on neighboring kingdoms, or be more absolute in their own; instead of all such *enlargements*, this is David's great desire, *an enlarged heart to run the way of God's commandments*.

And these *other* (how big soever they sound) are poor narrow desires: this *one* is larger and higher than them all, and gives evidence of a heart already large. But as it is miserable in *those* desires, so it is happy in *this*, that *much* would still have *more*.

Let others seek more *money*, or more *honor*, oh! the blessed choice of that soul that is still seeking more *love to God*, more affection, and more ability to do him service; that counts all days and hours for lost, which are not employed to this improvement; that hears the word in public, and reads it in private for this purpose, to kindle this love, or to blow the spark, if any there be already in the heart, to raise it to a clear flame, and from a little flame to make it burn yet hotter and purer, and rise higher: but, above all means, is often presenting *this* in prayer to him on whose influence all depends, in whose hand our hearts are, much more than in our own. It follows him with this desire, and works on him by his own interest. Though there can be really no accession of gain to him by our services, yet, he is pleased so to account with us as if there were. Therefore we may urge this: Lord, give more, and receive more: *I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart*.

We have here in the words a required *disposition*, and a suitable *resolution*. The *disposition* relates to the *resolution*, as the means of fulfilling it; and the *resolution* relates to the *disposition*, both as the end of desiring it, and as the motive of obtaining it. The *resolution* occurs first in the words,

*I will run*, &c.] The *way* resolved on, is, that of *God's commandments*; not the road of the polluted world, not the crooked ways of his own heart, but the highway, the royal way, the straight way of the kingdom, and that in the notion of subjection and obedience, *the way of thy commandments*. This, man naturally struggles against, and repines at. To be limited and bounded by a law is a restraint; and vain man could possibly find in his heart to do many of the same things that are commanded, but he would not be tied, would have his liberty, and do it of his own choice. This is the *enmity of the carnal mind* against God, as the apostle expresses it: *it is not subject to the law of God, neither can it be*; it breaks these bonds, and casts



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away the cords of his authority. This is sin, the transgression of the law; and this made the first sin so great, though in a matter one would think small, the eating of the fruit of a tree: it was rebellion against the majesty of God, casting off his law and authority, and aspiring to an imagined self-deity. And this is still the treasonable pride or independency, and wickedness of our nature, rising up against God who formed us of nothing.

And this is the power and substance of religion, the new impress of God upon the heart, obedience and resignment to him. To be given up to him as entirely his, to be moulded and ordered as he will, to be subject to his laws and appointments in all things, to have every action, and every word, under a rule and law, and the penalty to be so high, eternal death; all this to a carnal or haughty mind is hard. Not only every action and every word, but even every thought too, must be subject; the soul is not so much as thought-free. *Every thought is brought into captivity*, as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. x. 5; and so the licentious mind accounts it. Not only the affections and desires, but the very reasonings and *imaginations* are brought under this law.

Now, to yield this as reasonable and due to God; to own his sovereignty, and to acknowledge the law to be *holy, just, and good;* to approve, yea, to love it, even where it most contradicts and controls our own corrupt will and the law of sin in our flesh: this is true spiritual obedience; to study and inquire after the will of God in all our ways, what will please him, and having found it, to follow that which is here called the *way of his commandments;* to make this *our* way, and our business in the world, and all other things but accessories and by-works, even those lawful things that may be taken in, and used as helps in our way: as the disciples passing through the corn, plucked the ears and did eat it passing, as a by-work, but their business was to follow their Master. And whatsoever would hinder us in this way, must be watched and guarded against. To effect that, we must either remove and thrust it aside, or if we can not do that, yet we must go over it, and trample it under foot, were it the thing or the person that is dearest to us in the world. Till the heart be brought to this state and purpose, it is either wholly void of, or very low and weak in the truth of, religion.

We place religion much in our accustomed performances, in coming to church, hearing and repeating of sermons, and praying at home, keeping a round of such and such duties. The *way of God's commandments* is more in *doing* than in *discourse*. In many, religion evaporates itself too much out by the tongue, while it appears too little in their *ways*. Oh! but this is the main: one act of charity, meekness, or humility, speaks more than a day's discourse. All the means we use in religion, are intended for a further end, which if they attain not, they are nothing This end is to mortify and purify the heart. to mould it to the way of God's commandments in the whole track of our lives; in our private converse one with another, and our retired secret converse with ourselves, to have God still before us, and his law our rule, in all we do, that he may be our meditation day and night, and that his law may be our *counsellor*, as this Psalm hath it; to regulate all our designs and the works of our callings by it; to walk *soberly, and godly, and righteously, in this present world;* to curb and cross our own wills where they cross God's; to deny ourselves our own humor and pride, our passions and pleasures, to have all these subdued and brought under by the power of the law of love within us—this, and nothing below this, is the end of religion! Alas! among multitudes who are called Christians, some there may be who speak and appear like it, yet how few are there who make this their business, and aspire to this, *the way of God's commandments!*

His intended course in this way, the psalmist expresses by *running*. It is good to be in this way even in the slowest motions. Love will *creep* where it can not *go*. But if thou art so indeed, then thou wilt long for a swifter motion. If thou do but creep, be doing, creep on, yet desire to be enabled to go. If thou goest, but yet halting and lamely, desire to be strengthened to walk straight; and if thou walkest, let not that satisfy thee—desire to *run*. So here David did *walk* in this way, but he earnestly wishes to mend his pace: he would willingly *run*, and for that end he desires an *enlarged heart*.

Some dispute and descant too much whether they go or not, and childishly tell their steps, and would know at every pace whether they advance or not, and how much they advance, and thus amuse themselves, and spend the time of doing and going, in questioning and doubting. Thus it is with many Christians. But it were a more wise and comfortable way, to be endeavoring onward, and, if thou make little progress, at least to be desiring to make more; to be praying and walking, and praying that thou mayest walk faster, and that in the end thou mayest run; not to be satisfied with anything attained, but yet, by that unsatisfiedness, not to be so dejected as to sit down, or stand still, but rather excited to go on. So it was with St. Paul, Phil. iii. 13: *Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press forward*. If any one thinks that he hath done well and run far, and will take a pause, the great apostle is of another mind: *Not as if I had already attained*. Oh, no! far from that, he still sets forward. as if nothing were done: like a runner, not still looking back to see how much he hath run, but forward to what he is to run, *stretching forth* to that, inflamed with frequent looks at the mark and end.

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Some are retarded by looking on what is past, as not satisfied: they have done nothing, as they think, and so stand still discontented. But even in that way, it is not good to look too much to things behind: we must forget them rather, and press onward.

Some, if they have gone on well, and possibly run for a while, yet, if they fall, then they are ready, in a desperate malcontent, to lie still, and think all is lost; and in this peevish fretting at their falls, some men please themselves, and take it for repentance, whereas indeed it is not that, but rather pride and humor. Repentance is a more submissive, humble thing. But this is what troubles some men at their new falls (especially if after a long time of even walking or running), they think their project is now spoiled, their thoughts are broken off: they would have had somewhat to rejoice in, if they had still gone on to the end, but being disappointed of that, they think they had as good let alone, and give over. Oh! but the humble Christian is better taught: his falls teach him indeed to abhor himself; they discover his own weakness to him, and empty him of self-trust; but they do not dismay him to get up and go on, not boldly and carelessly forgetting his fall, but in the humble sense of it, walking the more warily, yet not the less swiftly; yea, the more swiftly too, making the more haste to regain the time lost by the fall. So then if you would run in this way, depend on the strength of God, and on his Spirit leading thee, that so thou mayest not fall. And yet if thou dost fall, arise, and, if thou art plunged in the mire, go to the Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and wash there; bemoan thyself before thy Lord; and if hurt and bleeding by thy fall, yet look to him, desire Jesus to pity thee, and bind up and cure thy wound, washing off thy blood, and pouring in of his own.

However it is with thee, give not over, faint not, run on. And that thou mayest run the more easily and expeditely, make thyself as light as may be, *lay aside every weight.* Hebrews xii. 1, 2. Clog not thyself with unnecessary burdens of earth, and especially lay aside that which, of all things, weighs the heaviest, and cleaves the closest, *the sin that so easily besets us*, and is so hardly put off us, that folds so connaturally to us, and we therefore think will not hinder us much. And not only the sins that are more outward, but the inner, close-cleaving sins, the sin that most of all sits easily to us; not only our cloak, but our inner coat, away with that too, as our Savior says in another case; and *run the race set before us*, our appointed stage, and that *with patience*, under all oppositions and discouragements from the world without, and from sin within. And to encourage thee in this, look to such a *cloud of witnesses*, that compasseth us about to further us, as troubles, temptations, and sin, do to hinder us. *They* encountered the like sufferings, and were encumbered with the like sins: and yet, they ran on, and got home. Alexander would have run in the *Olympic* games, if he had had kings to run with: now, in this race, kings and prophets, and righteous persons, run; yea, all are indeed a *kingly generation*, each one heir to a crown as the *prize* of this race.

And if these encourage but little, then *look* beyond them, above that cloud of witnesses, to the *sun*, the *Sun of Righteousness;* looking off from all things here, that would either entangle thee or discourage thee, taking thine eye off from them, and looking to him who will powerfully draw thee and animate thee. *Look to Jesus*, not only as thy *forerunner* in this race, but also as thy *undertaker* in it, *the author and finisher of our faith.* His attaining the end of the race, is the pledge of thy attaining, if thou follow him cheerfully on the same encouragements that he looked to: *Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God.*

*When thou shalt enlarge my heart.*] In all beings, the heart is the principle of motion, and according as it is more or less perfect in its kind, those motions which flow from it, are more or less vigorous. Therefore hath the psalmist good reason, to the end his spiritual course may be the steadfaster and the faster, to desire that the principle of it, *the heart*, may be more enabled and disposed, which he here expresses by its being *enlarged.*

What this *enlargement of the heart* is, a man's own inward sense should easily explain to him. Surely it would, did men reflect on it, and were they acquainted with their own hearts: but the most are not. They would find the carnal natural heart a narrow, contracted, hampered thing, bound with cords and chains of its own twisting and forging, and so incapable of *walking*, much less of *running*, in this way of God's commandments, till it be freed and enlarged.

The heart is taken generally in Scripture for the whole soul, the *understanding* and the *will*, in its several affections and motions; and the phrase being here of an *enlarged heart*, it seems very congruous to take it in the most enlarged sense.

It is said of Solomon, that he had a *large heart* (the same word that is here), *as the sand on the seashore*, 1 Kings iv. 29; that is, a vast comprehensive spirit, that could fathom much of nature, both its greater and lesser things. *He spake of trees, from the cedar in Lebanon, to the hyssop on the wall, and of great beasts, and small creeping things.*— Thus, I conceive, the *enlargement of the heart* compriseth the enlightening of the understanding. There arises a clearer light there, to discern spiritual things in a more spiritual manner; to see the vast difference between the vain things the world goes after, and the true, solid delight that is the *way of God's commandments;* to know the false blush of the pleasures of sin, and what deformity is under

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that painted mask, and not be allured by it; to have enlarged apprehensions of God. His excellency, and greatness, and goodness; how worthy he is to be obeyed and served. This is the great dignity and happiness of the soul; all other pretensions are low and poor, in respect of this. Here, then, is enlargement, to see the purity and beauty of his law, how just and reasonable, yea, how pleasant and amiable it is; that *his commandments are not grievous;* that they are beds of spices, the more we walk in them, still the more of their fragrant smell and sweetness we find.

And then, consequently, upon the larger and clearer knowledge of these things, the heart dilates itself in affection: the more it knows of God, still the more it loves him, and the less it loves this present world. Love is the great *enlarger* of the heart, to all obedience. Then nothing is hard, yea, the harder things become the more delightful.

All love of other things doth pinch and contract the heart, for they are all narrower than itself. It is framed to that wideness in its first creation, capable of enjoying God, though not of a full comprehending of him. Therefore, all other things gather it in, and straiten it from its natural size; only the love of God stretches and dilates it. He is large enough for it, yea, it, in its fullest enlargement, is infinitely too narrow for him. Do not all find it if they will ask themselves, that in all other loves and pursuits in this world, there is still somewhat that pinches? The soul is not at its full size, but, as a foot in a strait shoe, is somewhere bound and pained, and can not go freely, much less run: though another who looks on, can not tell where, yet each one feels it. But when the soul is set free from these narrow things, and is raised to the love of God, then is it at ease and at large, and hath room enough: it is both *elevated* and *dilated*. And this word signifies a *high-raised* soul, and is sometimes taken for *proud* and *lofty;* but there is a *greatness* and *height* of spirit in the love of God and union with him, that doth not vainly swell and lift it up, but with the deepest humility, joins the highest and truest magnanimity. It sets the soul above the snares that lie here below, in which most men creep and are entangled, in that *way of life*, which *is on high to the just*, as Solomon speaks.

Good reason hath David to join these together, and to desire the one as the spring and cause of the other; an *enlarged heart*, that he might *run the way of God's commandments.*

Sensible joys and consolations in God do encourage and enlarge the heart; but these are not so general to all, nor so constant to any. Love is the abounding fixed spring of ready obedience, and will make the heart cheerful in serving God, even without those felt comforts, when he is pleased to deny or withdraw them.

In that course or race, are understood *constancy, activity,* and *alacrity;* and all these flow from the *enlargement of the heart.*

1. *Constancy.* A narrow enthralled heart, fettered with the love of lower things, and cleaving to some particular sins, or but some one, and that in secret, may keep foot a while in the way of God's commandments, in some steps of them; but it must give up quickly, is not able to run on to the end of the goal. But a heart that hath laid aside every weight, and the most close-cleaving and besetting sin (as it is in that forecited place in the epistle to the Hebrews), hath stripped itself of all that may falter or entangle it, it runs, and runs on, without fainting or wearying; it is at large, hath nothing that pains it in the race.

2. *Activity.* Not only holding on, but running, which is a swift, nimble race. It stands not bargaining and disputing, but once knowing God's mind, there is no more question or demur. *I made haste and delayed not*, as in this psalm the word is, did not stay upon why and wherefore: he stood not to reason the matter, but ran on. And this love, enlarging the heart, makes it abundant in the work of the Lord, quick and active, despatching much in a little time.

3. *Alacrity.* All is done with cheerfulness, so, no other constraint is needful, where this overpowering, sweet constraint of love is. *I will run*, not be hauled and drawn as by force, but *skip* and *leap;* as the evangelic promise is, that the *lame shall leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.* Isa. xxxv. 6. The Spouse desires her Beloved *to hasten as a roe and hind on the mountain of spices*, and she, doth so, and each faithful soul runs toward him, to meet him in his way.

It is a sad heavy thing to do anything as in obedience to God, while the heart is straitened, not enlarged toward him by Divine love; but that once taking possession and enlarging the heart, that inward principle of obedience makes the outward obedience sweet; it is then a natural motion. Indeed, the soul runs in the ways of God, as the sun in his course, which finds no difficulty, being naturally fitted and carried to that motion; he *goes forth as a bridegroom, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.*

This is the great point which our souls should be studious of, to attain more *evenness*, and nimbleness, and *cheerfulness*, in the ways of God; and for this end we ought to seek above all things this *enlarged heart.* It is the want of this makes us bog, and drive heavily, and run long upon little ground. Oh, my beloved, how shallow and narrow are our thoughts of God! Most even of those who are truly godly, yet, are led on by a kind of instinct, and carried they scarcely know how, to give some attendance on God's worship, and to the avoidance of gross sin, and go on in a blameness course. It is better thus than to run to *excess of riot* and open wickedness,

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with the ungodly world. But, alas! this is but a dull, heavy and languid motion, where the heart is not enlarged by the daily growing love of God. Few, few are acquainted with that delightful contemplation of God, which ventilates and raises this flame of love. Petty things bind and contract our spirits, so that they feel little joy in God, little ardent, active desire to do him service, to crucify sin, to break and undo self-love within us, to root up our own wills to make room for his, that his alone may be ours, that we may have no will of our own, that our daily work may be to grow more like him in the beauty of holiness. You think it a hard saying, to part with your carnal lusts and delights, and the common ways of the world, and to be tied to a strict, exact conversation all your days. But oh! the reason of this is, because the heart is yet straitened and enthralled by the base love of these mean things, and that arises from the ignorance of things higher and better One glance of God, a touch of his love, will free and enlarge the heart, so that it can deny all, and part with all, and make an entire renouncing of all, to follow *him*. It sees enough in him, and in him alone, and therefore, can neither quietly rest on, nor earnestly desire anything beside him.

Oh! that you would apply your hearts to consider the excellency of this way of God's commandments! Our wretched hearts are prejudiced; they think it melancholy and sad. Oh! there is no way truly joyous but this. *They shall sing in the ways of the Lord*, says the psalmist. Psalm cxxxviii. 5. Do not men, when their eyes are opened, see a beauty in meekness, and temperance, and humility, a present delightfulness and quietness in them? Whereas in pride and passion, and intemperance, there is nothing but vexation and disquiet. And then consider the *end* of this way, and of this race in it, *rest and peace* for ever. It is the *way of peace*, both in its own nature, and in respect of its end. Did you believe that joy and glory which are set before you in this way, you would not any of you defer a day longer, but forthwith you would break from all that holds you back, and enter into this way, and run on cheerfully in it. The persuasion of those great things *above*, would enlarge and greaten the heart, and make the greatest things *here* very little in your eyes.

But would you attain to this enlarged heart for this race, as you ought to apply your thoughts to these Divine things, and stretch them on the promises made in the world, so, above all, take David's course, seek this enlargement of heart from God's own hand. For it is here propounded and laid before God by way of request: See what is my desire; I would gladly serve thee better, and advance more in *the way of thy commandments*; now this I can not do till my heart be more enlarged, and that can not be but by thy hand. *When thou shalt enlarge my heart.* Present this suit often: it is in his power to do it for thee. He can stretch and expand thy straitened heart, can hoist and spread the sails within thee, and then carry thee on swiftly; filling them, not with the vain air of man's applause, which readily runs a soul upon rocks and splits it, but with the sweet breathings and soft gales of his own Spirit, which carry it straight to the desired haven.

Findest thou sin cleaving to thee and clogging thee? Cry to him: "Help, Lord! set me free from my narrow heart.—I strive but in vain without thee; still it continues so.—I know little of thee; my affections are dead and cold toward thee.—Lord, I desire to love thee, here is my heart; and lest it fly out, lay hold on it, and take thine own way with it: though it should be in a painful way, yet, draw it forth, yea, draw it that it may run after thee." All is his own working, and all his motive is his own free grace. Let who will fancy themselves masters of their own hearts, and think to enlarge them by the strength of their own stretches of speculation; they alone, they alone are in the sure and happy way of attaining it, who humbly sue and wait for this enlargement of heart from his hand who made it.

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## SERMON XVI.

### CHRISTIAN TRIUMPH.

### Romans viii. 33, 34.

**Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.**

Other men may fancy and boast as they please, but there are none in the world but the godly alone, that are furnished with sufficiently strong supports and comforts against all possible hazards. And of these doth the apostle treat most freely, sweetly, and plentifully, in this chapter. He secures believers in their Christ, touching these two great evils, *after condemnation* and *present affliction*, that the one can not befall them, and the other can not hurt them.

For their immunity from the former, they have the clear word of the gospel, and the seal of the Spirit; and that former privilege made sure, as the far greater doth secure the other as the less.

They are freed from condemnation, and not only so, but entitled and ensured to a kingdom. And what hurt then can affliction do? Yea, it doth good; yea, not only it can not rob them of their crown, but it carries them on toward it, is their highway to it: *If we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together.* Yea, all things to the children of God do prove advantageous: severally taken in their present sense, they may seem evil,

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but taken jointly in their after issue, their working together is all for good. In their simple nature, possibly they are poison, yet, contempered, and prepared, they shall prove medicinal. *All these things are against me*, said old Jacob, and yet he lived to see even all these were *for* him. The children of God are indeed so happy, that the harshest things in their way change their nature, and become sweet and profitable. This much is effected by their prayers, which have a divine incantation in them. They breathe forth the expressions of their love to God, by which they are characterized, ver. 28, *them that love God;* and *that* is put on their hearts, the *impression of his love to them*, to which they are here led by the apostle, as to the spring-head of all. All their comforts and privileges flow thence, yea, all their love and their faith, appropriating those comforts and privileges. Yea, the very treasury of all together, Jesus Christ himself, is the free gift of this free love. He, as the greatest, ascertains all things besides as unspeakably less.

These two are such mighty arguments, that no difficulty nor grief can stand before them. The *love of God*, he is with us; who then can be against us? All the world it may be, but that all is nothing. Once it was nothing: it was that God who is our God, who loves us and is for us, who made it something; and if he will, it may again be nothing. And as it is at its best, it is nothing, being compared with *another gift* which he hath bestowed on us; and having bestowed that, surely, if there be anything in this world can do us any good, we shall not want it. *He that spared not his own Son, but gave him to the death for us, will he not with him give us all things?*

And to close all, he makes these two great immunities good to us in *Christ*. He fixes *there*. *There* we are freed from all fear of condemnation, or of being hurt by affliction. No accusation nor guiltiness can annul the righteousness of Christ, and that is made ours. No distress nor suffering can cut us off from the love of God; and if it can not do that, we need not fear it: all other hazards are no hazard, that being sure.

And in confidence of this, the apostle gives the defiance, casts a challenge to angels, to men, to all the world, upon these two points, Who shall *accuse?*—Who shall *separate?*—Accuse to God, or separate from him? Whatsoever times may come, the hardest that any can apprehend or foretell, if these two be not sufficient furniture against them, I know not what is.

Men are commonly busied about other events concerning them and theirs, what shall become of this or the other, and what if this or that fall out. But the conscience once raised to this inquiry, the soul being awake to discern the hazard of eternal death, all other fears and questions are drowned and lost in this great question, Am I condemned or not? Is my sin pardoned or not?

And then, a satisfying answer received concerning this, all is quiet; the soul reposes sweetly on God, and puts all its other concernments into his hands. Let him make me poor and despised, let him smite and chastise me, he hath forgiven my sin; all is well. That burden taken off, the soul can go light, yea, can leap and dance under all other burdens. Oh, how it feels itself nimble as a man eased of a load that he was even fainting under! Oh! blessed the man whose sin is taken off, *lifted from his shoulders* (that is the word, Psalm xxxii. 1), laid over upon Christ, who could *bear* the whole load, and *take* it *away*, take it out of sight, which we could never have done; no, they would have sunk us for ever. That one word, ἄφεσις, John i. 29, signifies both, and answers to the two, Isa. liii. 4, *He hath borne our grief, and carried our sorrows;* lifted them away. O how sweet a burden, instead of this, is that engagement of *obedience* and *love* to him as our Redeemer, and which is all he lays on us! If we follow him, and bear his cross, he is our strength, and bears both it and us. So then, this is the great point, the heart's ease, to be delivered from the condemning weight of sin.

And certainly, while men do not think thus their hearts have very slight impressions of the truth of these things. I fear the most of us scarcely believe this condemnation to come, at least, very shallowly, and so they can not much consider the deliverance from it provided for us in Jesus Christ. I can not see how it is possible for a heart persuaded of these things to be very careful about anything beside. You who eat and drink, and labor and trade, and bestow all your time either in the pains or the pleasures of this earth, what think you of eternity? Is it a light thing for you to perish for ever? After a few days vainly spent, to fall under the wrath of God for ever? Oh, that you would be persuaded to think on these things!

And you who have an interest in this free and blessed estate, why are your spirits so cold, so infrequent in the thoughts of it? Why are you not rejoicing in the Lord, gladdening yourselves in secret when you remember this?—Go the world as it will, my sin is forgiven me. Mistake me, accuse me whoso will, my God hath acquitted me in his Christ, and *he* loves me, and lives to intercede for me.

Methinks I hear some say, Ay, they who could say that, might be merry indeed; but alas! I have no such assurance. *Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect?* That is true, but here is the great point of so hard a resolution, Am I one of these?

That the apostle doth thus specify the owners of this consolation, by this high and hidden character of their election, is not to render it doubtful and dark; for his main aim, on the contrary, is; both to extend it as far as it can go, and to make it as clear as may be to all that have interest in it: but he des-

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ignates them by the primitive act of love fixing on them, so as it is now manifested to them in the subsequent effects which flow from their election: called, and sanctified, and conformed to Jesus Christ, both by his Spirit with them, and by the sufferings that without arise against them in the world. They are such as, being *the sons of God, are led by the Spirit of God*, and *walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit*.

And these things, indeed, considered as their characters, the stamp of God on them, the impressions of their election to life, do check the vain confidence of all carnal, ungodly professors of the name of Christ, and tell them that their pretended title to him is a mere delusion. Certainly, whosoever lives in the love of sin, and takes the flesh for his guide, that accursed, blind guide is leading him into the pit. What gross folly and impudence is it for any man, walking in the lust of his own heart, to fancy and aver himself to be a partner of that redemption, whereof so great a part is, to deliver us from the power of our iniquities, to renew our hearts, and reunite them to God, and possess them with his love!

The great evidence of thy election is, love. Thy love to him, gives certain testimony of his preceding, eternal love to thee: so are they here designated, *they that love God*. Thy choosing him, is the effect and evidence of his choosing thee. Now, this is not laborious, nor needs to be disputed. Amid all thy frailties, feel the pulse of thine affection, which way it beats, and ask thy heart whether thou love him or not; in this thou hast the character of thy election.

Know you not, that the redeemed of Christ and he are one? They live one life, Christ lives in them, and *if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*, as the apostle declares in this chapter. So, then, this we are plainly to tell you, and consider it, you that will not let go your sins and lay hold on Christ, have as yet no share in him.

But on the other side, the truth is, that when souls are once set upon this search, they commonly wind the notion too high, and subtilize too much in the dispute, and so entangle and perplex themselves, and drive themselves farther off from that comfort that they are seeking after: such measures and marks of grace, they set to themselves for their rule and standard; and unless they find those without all controversy in themselves, they will not believe that they have an interest in Christ and this blessed and safe estate in him.

To such I would only say, Are you in a willing league with any known sin? Yea, would you willingly, if you might be saved in that way, give up yourself to voluptuousness, and ungodliness, and not at all desire to follow Jesus Christ in the way of holiness? Then truly, I have not anything as yet to say for your comfort; only there is a salvation provided, and the door is yet open, and your heart may be changed. But, on the other side, are the desires of thy soul after Christ, a whole Christ, to be *righteousness*, and withal *sanctification* to thee? Wouldst thou willingly give up thyself to be ruled by him, and have him for thy king? Hadst thou rather choose to suffer the greatest affliction for his sake, to honor him, than to commit the least sin to displease him? Doth thy heart go out after him, when thou hearest him spoken of? Dost thou account him thy treasure, so that all the world sounds but as an empty shell to thee, when he is named? Says thy soul within thee, Oh, that he were mine! and, Oh, that I were his, that I could please him, and live to him! Then, do not toss thy spirit, and jangle and spin out thy thoughts in fruitless, endless doubtings, but close with this as thy portion, and be of good comfort; thy sins are, or will be forgiven thee.

I add further: if thou sayest still, that thou findest none of all this, yet, I say, there is warrant for thee to believe and lay hold on this righteousness here held forth, to the end that thou mayest then find those things in thee, and find comfort in them. Thou art convinced of ungodliness; then believe on him who justifies the ungodly. Thou art condemned; yet Christ is dead and risen. Flee to him as such, as the *Lamb slain, he who was dead, and is alive;* and then say, *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, or rather, that is risen. Who shall accuse?* It is true, they make clamor and make a noise, both Satan and thy conscience, but how can they fasten any accusation on thee? If they dare *accuse*, yet they can not *condemn*, when the Judge hath acquitted thee, and declared thee free, who is greater than all, and hath the absolute power of the sentence. All charges and libels come too late, after he hath once pronounced a soul righteous. And who shall condemn? *It is Christ that died.* If the sentence of the law be brought forth, yet here is the answer, it ought not to be *twice* satisfied; now, once it is satisfied in Christ, he hath died, and that stands for the believer. Whosoever flees to him, and lays hold on him for life, *he* can not die again, nor canst thou die, for whom he died once. *Or rather is risen;* that raises the assurance higher, and sets it firmer, for this evidences that in his death all was paid. When he, being the surety, and seized on for the debt, and once death's prisoner, yet, was set free, this clears the matter that there is no more to be paid. And yet further, in sign that all is done, he is raised to the height of honor above all principalities and powers, is set at the right hand of the Father, and there he sits and lives *to make intercession*, to sue out the fulfilling of all for believers, the bringing of them home, lives to see all made good that he died and covenanted for. So, now that his righteousness is thine who be-

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lievest, any challenge must meet with Christ first, and if it seize not on him, it can not light on thee, for thou art in him, married to him. And the same triumph that he speaks, Isa. l. 8, whence these words are borrowed, is made thine, and thou mayest now speak it in him. I know not what can cast him down, who hath this word to rest upon, and to comfort himself in.

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## SERMON XVII.

### CHRISTIAN TRIUMPH.

ROMANS viii. 35, &c.

**Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? &c.**

Is this he who so lately cried out, *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?* who now triumphs, O happy man! *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*

Yes, it is the same. Pained, then, with the thoughts of that miserable conjunction with a body of death, and so crying out, who will deliver, who will separate me from that? now, now, he hath found a Deliverer to do that for him, to whom he is for ever united, and he glories now in his inseparable union and unalterable love, which none can divide him from. Yea, it is through him, that presently after that word of complaint he praises God; and now, in him he triumphs. So vast a difference is there between a Christian taken in himself, and in Christ! When he views himself in himself, then he is nothing but a poor, miserable, polluted, perishing wretch; but then he looks again, and sees himself in Christ, and there he is rich, and safe, and happy; he triumphs, and he glories in it, above all the painted prosperities, and against all the horrid adversities of the world; he lives in his Christ, content and happy, and laughs at all enemies.

And he extends his triumph; he makes a common good of it to all believers, speaks it in their name, *Who shall separate us?* and would have them partake of the same confidence, and speak in the same style with him. It is vain that men fancy these to be expressions of revelations, or some singularly-privileged assurances; then, they would not suit their end, which is clearly, and undoubtedly, the encouragement of all the children of God, upon grounds that are peculiar to them from all the rest of the world, but common to them all, in all ages, and all varieties of condition.

It is true, all of them have not alike clear and firm apprehensions of their happy and sure estate, and scarcely any of them are alike at all times; yet, they have all and always the same right to this estate, and to the comfort of it, and when they stand in a right light to view it, they do see it so, and rejoice in it.

There be indeed some kinds of assurance that are more rare and extraordinary, some immediate glances or coruscations of the love of God upon the soul of a believer, a smile of his countenance; and this doth exceedingly refresh, yea, ravish the soul, and enables it mightily for duties and sufferings. These he dispenses arbitrarily and freely, where and when he will. Some weaker Christians sometimes have them, while stronger are strangers to them, the Lord training them to live more contentedly by faith till the day of vision come.

And that is the other, the less ecstatical, but the more constant and fixing kind of assurance, the proper assurance of faith: the soul, by believing, cleaves unto God in Christ as he offers himself in the gospel, and thence is possessed with a sweet and calm persuasion of his love; that being the proper work, to appropriate him, to make Christ, and in him eternal life, ours. So that it is the proper result and fruit of that its acting, especially when it acts anything strongly, to quiet the soul in him. Then, *being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ*, and from that peace, joy, yea, even *glorying in tribulation*, as there follows. And these springing, not from an extraordinary sense or view, but from the very innate virtue of faith working kindly and according to its own nature.

Therefore many Christians do prejudice their own comfort and darken their spirits, by not giving freedom to faith to act according to its nature and proper principles. They will not believe till they find some evidence, or assurance, which is quite to invert the order of the thing, and to look for fruit without setting a root for it to grow from.

Would you take Christ upon the absolute word of promise, tendering him to you, and rest on him so, this would engraft you into life itself, for that he is, and so those fruits of the Holy Ghost would bud and flourish in your hearts. From that very believing on him, would arise this persuasion, yea, even to a gloriation, and an humble boasting in his love. *Who shall accuse—Who shall condemn—Who shall separate?*

The undivided companion and undoubted helper and preserver of this confidence of faith, is an *active love* to Christ, leading to a constant study of holiness and strife against sin, which is the grand enemy of faith, which obstructs the very vital spirits of faith, which makes it sickly and heavy in its actings, and causes the palsy in the hand of faith, so that it can not lay so fast hold. Therefore, this you should be careful of; yea, know that of necessity it attends faith, and as faith grows, holiness will grow, and holiness growing will mutually strengthen and establish faith. The comforts of the Holy Ghost are holy, purifying comforts, and the more the soul is purifi-

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ed and made holy, the more is it cleared and enlarged to receive much of these comforts. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shal see God.* Unholiness is as damps and filthy mists in the soul; it darkens all.

Hence it is evident in what way Christians may and ought to aspire to this assurance. It is their portion, and in this way they are to aspire to it, and shall find it; if not immediately, yet, let them wait and go on in this way, they shall not miscarry.

Again, it appears that this assurance is no enemy to *holy* diligence, nor a friend of *carnal* security; on the contrary, it is the only thing that doth eminently ennoble and embolden the soul for all adventures and services. Base fears and doubtings, wherein some place much of religion (and many weak Christians seem to be in that mistake, to think it a kind of holy, spiritual temper to be questioning and doubting), I say these base fears can never produce any thing truly generous, no height of obedience; they do nothing but entangle and disable the soul for every good work. *Perfect love casts out* this *fear*, and works a sweet unperplexing fear, a holy wariness not to offend, which fears nothing else. And this confidence of love is the great secret of comfort, and of ability to do God service. Nothing makes so strong and healthy a constitution of soul, as pure love; it dares submit to God, and resign itself to him; it dares venture itself in his hand, and trust his word, and seeks no more than how to please him. A heart thus composed, goes readily and cheerfully unto all service, to do, to suffer, to live, to die, at his pleasure; and firmly stands to this, that *nothing can separate* it from that which is sufficient for it, which is all its happiness, *the love of God in Christ Jesus.* Ver. 39. That is, indeed, his love to us, but it is so as it includes inseparably the inseparableness of our love to him. For observe the things specified as most likely, if anything, to separate us; *Shall tribulation or distress*, &c. Now these especially, being endured for his sake, can not immediately have any likely visage of altering his love to us, but rather confirm us in it; but these shall not separate us, by altering our love to him, by driving us from him, and carrying us into any way of defection, or denial of his name, and so cut us off from our union with him, and interest in his love; and that is the way wherein the weak Christian will most apprehend the hazard of separation. Now, the apostle speaks his own sense, and would raise in his brethren the same confidence, as to that danger. There is no fear; not one of these things shall be able to carry us away. These mighty waves shall not unsettle our faith, nor quench the flame of our love. We shall be victors, and more than victors, in all. But how? Ver. 37: *Through him that hath loved us.* Thus his love makes sure ours. He hath such hold of our hearts as he will not let go, nor suffer us to let go our hold: all is fast by his strength. He will not lose us, nor shall any be able to pluck us out of his hand.

Jesus Christ is the *medium* of this love, the middle link that keeps all safe together between God and man, being so closely united in his personal nature, and the persons of men in and by him, to the Father. So here, it is first called the *love of Christ*, ver. 35, and then, in the close, *The love of God in Christ;* the soul being first carried to him as nearest, but so carried by him into that primitive love of God that flows in Christ, and that gave even Christ to us as before. And this is the bottom-truth, the firm ground of the saints' perseverance, which men not taking aright, must needs question the matter. Yea, we may put it out of question upon their suppositions, for if our own purposes and strength were all we had to rely on, alas! how soon were we shaken!

So *the love of God in Christ* is not only here mentioned as the point of happiness, from which we can not be removed, but as the principle of firmness that makes itself sure of us, and us of it, and will not part with us.

Now, it is no pride in a Christian, but the truest humility, to triumph and glory in this. This is it that makes all sure: this is the great comfort and the victory of the saints. He that loved us and bought us so dear, will not lightly slip from us; yea, upon no terms will he let us go, unless some stronger than he is, meet with him, and by force bereave him of us; which we know is impossible. He and his Father, who are one in themselves, and in their strength, and one in this love, are greater and stronger than all; and he that once overcame for us, always overcomes in us.

Thus he lets temptation and tribulation assault us, and thus neither disproves his love, nor endangers his right to us; yea, it doth but give proof and evidence of the invincible firmness of both. He suffers others to lie soft, and sit warm, and pamper their flesh at leisure; but he hath nobler business for his champions, his worthies, and most of all for the stoutest of them: he calls them forth to honorable services, to the hardest encounters; he sets them on, one to fight with sickness, another with poverty, another with reproaches and persecutions, with prisons and irons, and with death itself. And all this while, loves he them less or they him? Oh, no. He looks on and rejoices to see them do valiantly; it is the joy of his heart, no sight on earth so sweet to him; and it is all the while by his subduing, and in his strength, that they hold out in the conflict, and obtain the conquest.

And thus they are the more endeared to him by these services and these adventures of love for him, and he still likewise is the more endeared to them. Certainly, the more any one suffers for Christ, the more he loves



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Christ: as love doth grow and engage itself by all it does and suffers, and burns hotter by what it encounters and overcomes, as by fuel added to it. As to Jesus Christ, by what he suffered for us we are the dearer to him, so he is to us by all we suffer for his sake.

Love grows most by opposition from others whosoever, when it is sure of acceptance and the correspondence of mutual love in the party loved. Above all, this heavenly, divine love is *strong as death*, a vehement flame, *a flame of God*, indeed, as the word is, Cant. viii. 6, and *many waters can not quench it;* not all these that here follow one another, *tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword.* Yea, in the midst of these, I say, it grows: the soul cleaves closer to Christ, the more attempts are made to remove it from him, though *killed all the day ong.* This passage from the Psalms is most fit, both to testify that persecution is not unusually the lot of the saints, and to give instance of their firm adherence to God in all troubles, as the church there professeth. And if the saints in that dispensation could reckon in such a manner, much more ought Christians, upon a clearer discovery of the covenant of grace and their union with God in Christ. The saints are as in a common butchery in the world; yea, not only *as sheep for the slaughter*, but sometimes as sheep for the altar, men thinking it a sacrifice. *They that kill you*, says our Savior, *shall think they do God service.* Yet even this pulls not from him. They part with life? ay, why not? This life is but a death, and he is our life for whom we lose it.

All these things do but increase the victories and triumphs of love, and make it more glorious: as they tell of her multiplying labors to that champion, they are not only conquerors, but *more than conquerors*, by multiplied victories, and they gain in them all both more honor and more strength; they are the fitter for new adventures, and so more than simple conquerors. We overcome, and are sure not to lose former conquests, but to add more, and conquer on to the end; which other conquerors are not sure of. Oftentimes they outlive their own successes and renown, and lose on a sudden what they have been gaining a whole lifetime. Not so here; we are secured in the author of our victories. It is *through him that hath loved us;* and he can not grow less, yea, he shall still grow greater, till all his enemies be made his footstool.

Having given the challenge and finding none to answer, and that all, the most apparent, are in a most rhetorical accumulation silenced, *tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword*, &c., he goes on confidently in the triumph, and avers his assurance of full and final victory against all imaginable power of all the creatures: *neither death nor life*, not the fear of the most terrible death, nor the hope or love of the most desirable life. And in the height of this courage and confidence, he supposes impossible enemies, *Nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers;*—unless you take it of the angels of darkness only; but if it could be possible that the others should offer at such a thing, they would be too weak for it. No sense of any *present things*, nor apprehensions of *things to come;* not anything within the vast circle of the world above or below; *nor any creature*, can do it. Here sin is not specified, because he is speaking of outward oppositions and difficulties expressly, and because that is removed by the former challenge, *Who shall accuse?* that asserting a free and final acquittance of all sin, a pardon of the curse, which yet will never encourage any of those to sin who live in the assurance of this love. Oh, no: and these general words do include it too. *Nothing present, nor to come*, &c. So it is carried clear, and is the satisfying comfort of all whom Jesus Christ hath drawn after him, and united in his love.

It is enough; whatsoever they may be separated from, the things or persons dearest in this world, it is no matter: the jewel is safe. None can take my Christ from me, and I am safe in him, as his purchase. None can take me from him, and being still in his love, and through him in the Father's love, that is sufficient. What can I fear? What can I want? All other hazards signify nothing. How little value are they of! And for how little a while am I in danger of them! Methinks, all should look on a believer with an emulous eye, and wish his estate more than a king's.

Alas, poor creatures! rich men, great men, princes and kings, what vain things are they that you embrace and cleave to! Whatsoever they be, soon must you part. Can you say of any of them, *Who shall separate us?* Storms may arise and scatter ships that sail smoothly together in fair weather. Thou mayest be removed, by public commotions and calamities, from thy sweet dwellings, and societies, and estates. You may even live to see and seek your parting. At last you must part, for you must die. Then, farewell parks and palaces, gardens and honors, and even crowns themselves. Then, dearest friends, children and wife must be parted with. *Linquenda tellus, et domus et placens uxor.* And what hast thou left, poor soul, who hast not Christ, but that which thou wouldst gladly part with and canst not, the condemning guilt of all thy sins?

But the soul that is in Christ, when other things are pulled away, feels little or nothing: he cleaves to Christ, and these separations pain him not. Yea, when that great separatist death, comes, that breaks all other unions, even that of the soul and body, yet, so far is it from separating the believer's soul from its beloved Lord Jesus, that, on the contrary, it carries it into the nearest union with him, and the fullest enjoyment of him for ever.

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## SERMON XVIII.

### GOODNESS OF GOD, AND WICKEDNESS OF MAN.

### Isaiah lix. 1, 2.

**Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it can not save, neither his ear heavy, that it can not hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will no. hear.**

Our vain minds are naturally fruitful in nothing more than in mistakes of God. For the most part we think not on him, and when we do it, we fancy him according to our own affections, which are wholly perverse and crooked.

Men commonly judge it a vain thing to spend much pains and time in worshipping him; and if they are convinced of this, and tied to it by the professions of his name, then they think all religion is a shell of external diligences and observances, and count it strange if this be not accepted. In the former chapter we find this, in the prophet's contest with the people about their fasting, and their opinion of it; he cuts up their sacrifices, and lets them see what was within; the skin was sound and looked well, but being opened, the entrails were found rotten. And here he enters into another contest, against the latent atheism of their hearts, who after their manner of seeking God, not finding him, and not being delivered, are ready to think that he either can not, or will not help, and rather rest on that gross mistake, than inquire into themselves for the true cause of their continuing calamities: they incline rather to think it is some indisposition in God to help, than what it truly is, a want of reformation in themselves that hinders it. It is not likely that they would say thus, or speak it out in plain terms; no, nor possibly speak it formally and distinctly within, not so much as in their thoughts; and yet, they might have a confused, dark conceit of this. And much of the atheism of man's heart is of this fashion: not formed into resolved propositions, but latent,* in confused notions of it, scarcely discernible by himself; at least, not searched out and discerned in his own breast: there they are, and he sees them not, not written assertions, but flying fumes, filling the soul, and hindering it to read the characters of God that are writ upon the conscience.

The impenitency of men, in any condition, and particularly under distress, is from the want of clear apprehensions and deep persuasions of God, of his just anger provoked by their sin, and of his sweetness and readiness to forgive and embrace a returning sinner; of his sovereign power, able to rid them out of the greatest trouble, his ear, quick enough to hear the cries, yea, the least whispering of an humbled heart in the lowest deep of his sorrow, and his arm, long enough to reach them, and strong enough to draw them forth. *He that comes unto God, must believe that he is,* says the apostle, Heb. xi. 6. So, certainly, he who *believes* that, must *come*; it will sweetly constrain him: he can not but come, who is so persuaded. Were men's hearts much impressed with that belief in all their troubles, they would eye men less, and God more, and without delay they would fasten upon the church's resolution, Hos. vi. 1: *Come and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn, and he will heal us, he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.* And this is the very thing that the prophet would here persuade to by his present doctrine; and having impleaded them guilty, he sets them a copy of humble confession, ver. 12, &c. Hence the frequent complaints in the Psalms, *Why hidest thou thyself?* So Psalm xxii. 2: *I cry, but thou hearest not.*

In the words of these two verses, these tw things appear: *a sad condition,* and *the true cause of it.*

The *condition,* I think, I have reason to call *sad:* it is God hiding his face that he will not hear. This may be either the *personal* estate of his *children,* or the *public* estate of his *church.* From a soul, he hides his face, not so much in the withdrawing of sensible comforts and sweet tastes of joy, which to many are scarcely known, and to such as do know them, commonly do not continue very long, but it is a suspension of that lively influence of his Divine power, for raising the mind in the contemplation of him and communion with him in prayer and meditation, which yet may be, where those relishes and senses of joy are not. And the returns of it appear in beating down the power of sin, or abating and subduing it, making the heart more pure and heavenly, making it more to live by faith in Christ, to be often at the throne of grace, and to receive gracious answers, supplies of wants, and assistances against temptations. Now, when there is a cessation and obstruction of these and such like workings, the face of God is *hid;* the soul is at a loss, seeks still and can not find him whom it loveth. And in this condition it can not take comfort in other things: they are too low. It is a higher and nobler desire than to be satisfied, or diverted, with the childish things that even men delight in who know not God. It is a love-sickness, which nothing can cure but the presence and love of the party loved. Yea, nothing can so much as allay the pain, and give an interval of ease, or recover a fainting fit, but some good word or look, or at least some kind message from him. Set thee in a palace, and all delights about thee, and a crown on thy head, yet, if his love has ceased on thy heart, these are all nothing without him. It was after David was advanced to his kingdom, and is in the Psalm of the dedication of his royal house, that he said, *Thou didst hide thy face, and I*

* Ezek. viii. 7. *Behind the wall.*

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*was troubled.* Ps. xxx. 7. *q. d.* All is dark; all the shining marble, and the gold, and the azure, lose their lustre, when thou art not here dwelling with me.

And thus for the church; God is the proper light, the beauty, the life of it. Deck it with all this world's splendor, with all the dresses of pompous worship, these are not its genuine beauty; and they provoke Him who is its *ornament* (as is Jer. ii. 32) to depart. But give it the native purity and beauty of holy ministers and ordinances well regulated, yet, even that is but a dead comeliness, proportion and feature without life, when God is absent.

And as for the matter of deliverances and working for her, which is here the thing in hand, none can do anything in that, not the wisest, nor the best of men, with all their combined wit and strength, when he retires and comes not forth, doth not show himself on the behalf of his people, and work their works for them. These have, it may be, some kind of prayer possibly; they offer at extraordinaries, and yet obtain nothing, are not heard. The saddest note in all the Song of Lamentations, is that at chapter iii. 43, 44: *Thou hast covered with anger, and persecuted us; thou hast slain, thou hast not pitied; thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through.* Still, while that door stands open, there is hope and remedy for other evils; but that being shut, what can a people, or a soul expect, but growing troubles, one sorrow upon the back of another? Yea, that is the great trouble, the hiding of his face, and his refusing to hear. Observe Job xxxiv. 29: *When he giveth peace, who then can make trouble?* Now the other, in the same terms, would have been, *When he makes trouble, who can give peace?* But instead of this, it is, *When he hides his face, who then can behold him?* No peace but in beholding him, and nothing but trouble, *that* is the grand trouble, when he *hides his face.* And it is expressed in both cases, whether it be personal or national, *whether against a nation or a man only.*

This is the thing wherein the strength of other troubles lie, that which gives them weight, when they impart and signify thus much, that the face of God is hid from a soul or a people.

We ought to inquire if this be not our condition at this time. Hath he not hid his face from us? Are we not left in the dark, that we know not which way to turn us? Either we must sit still and do nothing, or, if we stir, we do but rush one upon another, as in darkness, contesting each to have the way, and yet, when we have it given us, we know not well which way to go. And we think to be cleared, but it fails us; as in this chapter, ver. 9: *We wait for light, but behold obscurity, for brightness, but we walk in darkness: we grope for the wall like the blind, and stumble at noonday as in the night.* Our counsels are strangely darkened, and there is no right understanding one of another. By all our debates, little or no clearing of things is attained, but our passions are more inflamed, and parties are further off; the light of sound judgment gone, and with it the heat of love, instead of which, that miserable infernal heat, heat without light, mutual hatreds and revilings; both sides (verbally at least) agreeing in the general terms both of their desires and designs, and yet falling out about modes and fashions of them. And to say no more of parties, the enemies of religion on both hands, right and left, are in action and in power, and only those who love that which we conceive is the way of truth, standing as a naked prey to whether of the two shall prevail. Desires and prayers we have presented, and see as yet no appearance of an issue, but further confusion, even fasting to strife and debate. And where are there any that look like persons to stand in the gap, lifting up *holy hands, without wrath or doubting?* Hearts are still as unhumbled, and live as unreformed as ever! New intestine troubles are most likely to arise, few or none laying it to heart, and with calm, lowly spirits mourning before God for it. *Ephraim against Manasseh, and Manasseh against Ephraim, and they both against Judah; and for all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.* Isa. ix. 21.

But generally, men ought to be less in descanting one on another, and more in searching and inquiring each into himself. Even where it may seem zeal, yet nature and passion may more easily let in the other; but this self-search and self-censure is an uneasy task, the most unpleasant of all things to our carnal, self-loving hearts. But the heavy hand of God shall never turn from us, nor his gracious face turn toward us, till there is more of this among us. Most say their prayers, and as they are little worth, they look little after them, inquire not what becomes of them. But, my brethren, would we continue to call, and find favorable answers, we must be more within. The heart must be made a temple to God, wherein sacrifices do ascend; but that they may be accepted, it must be purged of idols, nothing left in any corner though never so secret, to stir the jealousy of our God, who sees through all. Oh, happy that heart that is, as Jacob's house, purged, in which no more idols are to be found, but the Holy God dwelling there alone as in his holy temple!

*Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened.*] Much of all knowledge lies in the knowledge of causes; and in practical things, much of the right ordering of them depends on it. The true cause of a disease found out, is half the cure. Here we have the miseries of an afflicted people reduced to their real cause: that which is not the cause, is first removed. *Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it can not save; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God.*

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We are not only to be untaught this error, that we think not so, but are to be taught to believe and think on that truth, that God is still the same in power and goodness, to keep up the motion of it in our hearts. So we may call in past experiences and relations of God's former workings for his people, and that with much use and comfort. He who brought forth his people out of Egypt with an outstretched arm (as still they are reminded of that deliverance by the prophets, and called to look on it as the great instance and pledge of their restoration by the same hand), can again deliver his people when at the lowest. Isaiah l. 2.

And with this belief, we shall not faint in the time of deep distress, whether our own, or the church's, knowing the unalterable, invincible, infinite power of our God; that all the strength of all enemies is nothing, and less than nothing, to his: their devices, knots of straw. What is it that is to be done for his church, if her and his glory be interested in it? There remains no question in point of difficulty: that hath no place with him. The more difficult, yea, if impossible for us or any human strength, the more fit work for him. *Because it is hard for you, shall it also be hard for me?* saith the Lord in the prophet. And where Jeremy uses that argument in prayer, he hath his answer returned in the same words, as the echo to the prayer, resounding from heaven (chap. xxxii. 17, compared with ver. 27), and that in relation to the great restoration of the Jews from Babylon, as is expressly promised, ver. 36, &c. And there the prophet gives that first great example of Divine power, the forming of the world, ver. 17: *Behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power.*

Men think it is an easy, common belief, and that none doubt of the omnipotency of God. But oh, the undaunted confidence it would give to the heart, being indeed firmly believed, and wisely used and applied to particular exigencies! Men either doubt, or (which, upon the matter, for the use of it, is all one) they forget who the Lord is, when their hearts misgive them because of the church's weakness, and the enemy's power. What is that upon the matter? Remember whose is the church, God's, and what his power is, and then see if thou canst find any cause of fear. See Isa. xli. 14: *Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men—few* or *weak men*—(so the word is)—*of Israel: I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.* So Isa. li. 12, 13: *I, even I, am he that comforteth you.* There is the strength of it. *Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man, which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?* Do but think aright on him, and then see if it be *possible* for thee to fear. All thy little doubts and despondencies of mind will fly and vanish away before one clear thought of thy God. Though the world were turning upside down, it shall go well with them who fear him.

And as this apprehension of God strengthens faith, so it quickens prayer. It stirs thee up to seek to him for help, when thou knowest and rememberest that there it is. There is help in him, power enough, and no want of readiness and good will neither. If we apply ourselves to seek him aright, his hand is as strong to save, and his ear as quick to hear, as ever. And in this, that *his ear is not heavy*, is signified both his speedy and certain knowledge of all requests sent up to him, and his gracious inclination to receive them. Now, these persuasions do undoubtedly draw up the heart toward him.

Again, as they strengthen faith, and quicken prayer, so they teach us repentance, direct us inward to self-examination, to the searching, and finding out, and purging out of sin, when deliverance is delayed; for we are sure it stops not upon either of these on God's part, either the shortness of his hand, or the dulness of his ear. Whence is it then? Certainly, it must be somewhat on our side, that works against us, and prejudices our desires. So here, thus you see the clear aim of it: *Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it can not save, nor his ear heavy, that it can not hear.* What is it then that hinders? Oh! it is this, out of all doubt—*Your iniquities separate*, old sins unrepented of, and new sins still added, as all impenitent sinners do. Now this separates *between you and God*, for he is a holy God, a just God: who hates iniquity. And between you and *your* God: that pleads no connivance at your sins, but rather calls for nearer inspection and sharper punishment. *He will be sanctified in those that are near him*, in *them* especially. Their sin is aggravated much by that relation, *your* God. To sin against him so grossly, so continuedly, with so high a hand, and so impenitent hearts; not reclaimed by all his mercies, by the remembrance of his covenant made with you, and mercies bestowed on you, nor by the fear of his judgments threatened, nor by the feeling of them inflicted; no returning or relenting, not of his own people to their God—surely, you must be yet more punished. Amos iii. 2. *You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities.* q. d. I let others escape with many things that I can not pass over in you. You fast and pray, it may be, you howl and keep a noise, but you amend nothing, forsake not one sin for all your sufferings, and for all your moanings and cries. You would be delivered, but do not part with one of your lusts or wicked customs, even for a deliverance; and so the quarrel remains still. It is that which separates, is as a huge wall between us, between me and your prayers, and between you and my helping hand; and

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though I do hear, and could help, yet, I will not: till this wall be down, you shall not see me, nor find by any gracious sign that I hear you. This hides his face, *that he will not hear*.

This way God hath established in his ordinary methods with his people: though sometimes he uses his own privilege, yet, usually he links *sin* and *calamity* together, and *repentance* and *deliverance* together.

Sin separates and hides his face, not only from a people that professes his name, but even from a soul that really bears his name stamped upon it. Though it can not fully, and for ever, cut off such a soul, yet, in part, and for a time, it may, yea, to be sure, it will separate, and bide the face of God from them. Their daily inevitable frailties do not this: but either a course of careless walking, and many little unlawful liberties taken to themselves, that will rise and gather as a cloud, and hide the face of God; or some one gross sin, especially if often reiterated, will prove as a firm stone-wall, or rather as a brazen-wall, built up by their own hands between them and heaven, and will not be so easily dissolved or broken down; and yet, till that be, the light of His countenance, who is the life of the soul, will be eclipsed and withheld from it.

And this considered, besides that law of love that will forbid so foul ingratitude, yet, I say, this considered, even our own interest will make us wary of sinning. Though we were sure not to be yet altogether separated from the love of God by it, yet, thou who hast any persuasion of that love, darest thou venture upon any known sin? Thou art not hazardless and free from all damage by it, if thou hast need of that argument to restrain thee. Then, before thou run upon it, sit down and reckon the expense: see what will it cost thee if thou do commit it. Thou knowest that once it cost the heart-blood of thy Redeemer to expiate it, and is that a light matter to thee? And though that paid all that score, nothing thou canst suffer being able to do anything that way, yet, as an unavoidable present fruit of it, it will draw on this damage; thou shalt be sure for a time, it may be for a long time, possibly most of thy time, nearly all thy days, it may darken much that love of God to thee, which if thou dost but esteem, think on it. It changes not in him, but a sad change will sin bring on thee, as to thy sight and apprehension of it. Many a sweet hour of blessed communion with thy God shalt thou miss, and either be dead and stupid in that want, or mourn after him, and yet find, though sighs and tears continue, the door shut, yea, a dead wall raised between thee and him, and at best much straitening and pains to take it down again; contrary to other walls and buildings, which are far more easily pulled down than built up, but this is a great deal easier built up than pulled down. True, thy God could cast it down with a word, and i is his free grace that must do it, otherwise thou couldst never remove it: yet will he have thee feel thy own handywork, and know thy folly. Thou must be at pains to dig at it, and may be it will cost thee broken bones in taking it down, pieces of it falling heavy and sad upon thy conscience, and crushing thee: as David cried out at that work, for a healing word from God, *Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.* Psalm li. 8. It will force thee to say, O fool that I was, what meant I! Oh! it is good, keeping near God, and raising no divisions. What are sins? False delights, by which a man but provides his own vexation. Now, this distance from God, and all this turmoiling, and breaking, and crying before he appears again, consider if any pleasure of sin can countervail this damage. Surely, when thou art not out of thy wits, thou wilt never make such a bargain for all the pleasure thou canst make out of any sin, to breed thyself all this pains, and all this grief, at once to displease thy God, and displease thyself, and make a partition between him and thee. Oh, sweet and safe ways of holiness, walking with God in his company and favor! He *that orders his conversation aright*, he *sees the loving kindness of the Lord:* It is shown to him; he lives in the sight of it. Psalm l. 23.

But if any such separation is made, yet, is it thy great desire to have it removed? Why then there is hope. See to it, labor to break it down, and pray to him to help thee, and he will put forth his hand, and then it must fall. And in all thy sense of separation, look to him who *brake down the middle wall of partition*, Eph. ii. 14. There it is spoken of as between men, Jews and Gentiles, but so as it was also between the Gentiles and God, who were separated from his people, and from himself. See ver. 16: *That he might reconcile both to God in one body;* and ver. 18: *Through him we have access by one Spirit to the Father.* And then he adds, that they were *no more strangers and foreigners*, dwelling on the other side of the wall, παροικοι, as the word is, *but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.*

Oh, that we knew more what it were to live in this sweet society, in undivided fellowship with God! Alas! how little is understood this living in him, separated from sin and this world, which otherwise do separate from him; solacing our hearts in his love, and despising the base muddy delights that the world admires: hoping for that *New Jerusalem*, where none of these walls of sin are, nor any one stone of them, and for that bright day wherein there is no cloud nor mist to hide our Sun from us.

Now, for the condition of the church, know sin to be the great obstructer of its peace, making him to withdraw his hand, and hide his face, and to turn away his ear

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from our prayers, and loath our fasts: as Isa. i. 15, and Jer. xiv. 12. The quarrel stands: sin not repented of and removed. The wall is still standing; oaths, and sabbath-breaking, and pride, and oppression, and heart-burnings still remaining. Oh, what a noise of religion and reformation! All sides are for the name of it, and how little of the thing! The gospel itself is despised, grown stale, as trivial doctrine. Oh, my beloved! if I could speak many hours without intermission, all my cry would be, *Repent and pray. Let us search and try our ways, and turn unto the Lord our God.* Oh, what walls of every one's sin are set to it! Dig diligently to bring down thine own; and for those huge walls of public national guiltinesses, if thou canst do nothing to them more, compass them about as Jericho, and look up to heaven for their downfall. Cry, Lord, these we ourselves have reared, but without thee who can bring them down? Lord, throw them down for us. A touch of thy hand, a word of thy mouth, will make them fall. Were we less busied in impertinences, and more in this most needful work, it might do some good. Who knows but the Lord might make his own way clear, and return and visit us, and make his face to shine, that we might be saved!

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## SERMON XIX.

### TIME TO AWAKE.

### Romans xiii. 11, 12, 13, 14.

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.
The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.
Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.
But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

The highest beauty of the soul, the very image of God upon it, is holiness. He that is aspiring to it himself, is upon a most excellent design; and if he can do anything to excite and call up others to it, he performs a work of the greatest charity.

This, St. Paul doth frequently and pressingly in his writings. This epistle, as it doth admirably clear the doctrine of *justification*, it doth not less earnestly urge the doctrine of *sanctification*. That one sentence about the middle thereof, does excellently unite them, and so is the summary of all that goes before, and all that follows: ch. viii. 1: *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

The present words are as an alarm, or morning watch-bell, of singular use, not only awaking a Christian o his day's work, but withal reminding him what it is. And these two shall be all our division of them. 1. Our *awaking* sounded. 2. Our *walking* directed. The former, ver. 11, 12, tells us, it is time to rise, and calls us up to put on our clothes, and, being soldiers, our arms. The latter, ver. 13, directeth our behavior and employment throughout the day. The last verse doth shortly, and that fully and clearly, fold up both together. We shall take the words just as they lie.

*And that, knowing the time.* This imports much in all actions, and here it is the apostle's great argument. Now it is unfit to sleep, *knowing the time:* however it might have been before, now it is very unseasonable and unsuitable, that you lie snoring as at midnight. Do you know what o'clock it is (ἡ ὥρα)? It is time to rise: it is morning, the day begins to appear.

[*Observation.*] All the days of sinful nature are dark night, in which there is no right discerning of spiritual things. Some light there is of reason, to direct natural and civil actions, but no daylight. Till the sun arise it is night still, for all the stars, and the moon to help them. Notwithstanding natural speculations, that are more remote, and all prudence and policy for affairs, that come somewhat nearer to action, yet we are still in the night. And you do think that a sad life, but the truth is, we sleep on in it, and our heads are still full of new dreams which keep us sleeping. We are constantly drunk with cares or desires of sense, and so our sleep continues. Sometimes it is called *death—dead in sins*, &c. Now sleep is brother to death; and so, by it not unfitly is the same state resembled. No spiritual life we have at all, and therefore in that sense are truly dead. But because there is in us a natural life, and in that, a capacity of spiritual life, therefore we are said to be asleep. As in a deep sleep, our soul is bound up and drowned in flesh, through a surcharge of the vapors of gross, sensible things that we glut ourselves withal; and the condition of our wisest thoughts, in relation to our highest good, are nothing but dreams and reveries. Your projectings, and bargainings, and buildings, these be a better sort of dreams; but your envyings, and mutual despisings and discontents, your detracting and evil-speaking, these are more impertinent, and to yourselves more perplexing. And your sweetest enjoyments in this life, which you think most real, are but shadows of delight, a more pleasant sort of dreams. All pomps and royal solemnities, the Scripture calls φαντασίας, *phantasies*, Acts xxv. 23. A man will not readily think so while he is in them. *Somnium narrare vigilantis est.* We do not perceive the vanity of our dreams, and know that they are so, till we be awaked. Sometimes in a dream a man will have such a thought that it is but a dream, yet doth he not thoroughly see the

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folly thereof, but goes on in it. The natural man may have sometimes a glance of such thoughts, that all these things he is either turmoiling or delighting in, are vanity and nothing to the purpose; yet, he awakes not, but raves on still in them; he shifts a little, turns on his bed as a door on its hinges, but turns not off, does not rise.

But the spiritual-minded Christian, who is indeed awake, and looks back on his former thoughts and ways, oh, how does he disdain himself, and all his former high fancies that he was most pleased with, finding them dreams! Oh, what a fool, what a wretch was I, while my head was full of such stuff, building castles in the air, imagining and catching at such gains, and such preferments and pleasures, and either they still running before me, and I could not overtake them, or, if I though I did, what have I now, when I see what it is, and find that I have embraced a shadow, false hopes, and fears, and joys! *He thinks he hath eaten, and his soul is empty.* Isa. xxix. 8. And you that will sleep on, may; but sure I am, when you come to your death-bed, if possibly you awake then, then shall you look back, with sad regret, upon whatsoever you most esteemed and gloried in under the sun. While they are coming toward you, they have some show; but, as a dream that is past, when these gay things are flown by, then we see how vain they are. As that luxurious king who caused to be painted on his tomb two fingers, as sounding one upon another, with that word, *All is not worth so much, Non tanti est.* I know not how men make a shift to satisfy themselves; but, take a sober and awakened Christian, and set him in the midst of the best of all things that are here, his heart would burst with despair of satisfaction, were it not for a hope that he hath, beyond all that this poor world either attains or is seeking after, and that hope is, indeed, the dawning of the day that is here spoken of.

*It is time to awake*, says he: *your salvation is nearer than when ye believed.* That bright day you look for, is hastening forward; it is nearer than when you began to believe. The night is far spent, the gross darkness is already past, some daylight there is, and it is every moment growing, and the perfect, full morning-light of it is very near.

[*Observation.*] Grace, and the gospel that works it, compared with the dark night of nature, is the day, and it is often so called: the apostle here calls it so, *Let us walk honestly as in the day.* But yet, that same light of the gospel shining to us in the word, and within us by the Spirit, is but the appearance or approaching of the day, a certain pledge of it, yea, a kind of beginning of it, telling us that it is near. It is one and the same light, and where it enters into any soul, it makes sure that eternal full day to it, that it shall not be disappointed of, more than the day can go back, and the sun fail to rise when the dawn is begun. And this begun light is still growing clearer, and tending to the perfect day. Prov. iv. 18. And at the first peep or appearance of it, so much it is, that the soul is called to awake and arise, and put on day-clothes, and apply itself to the actions of the day; and that is the thing the apostle here presses by it.

Oh, the blessed gospel, revealing God in Christ, and calling up sinners to communion with him, dispelling that black night of ignorance and accursed darkness that otherwise had never ended, but passed on to an endless night of eternal misery! Says not Zacharias with good reason in his song, that it was *through the tender mercy of God that this dayspring from on high did visit us?*

*Now*, says the apostle, *this day appearing, it is time to awake.* And the longer it is since it began to appear, and the clearer the light grows, the more high time is it to awake and rise, and cast off night-clothes and night-works, *works of darkness*, and to put on garments, yea, *armor of light.* He that is a soldier, his garments are not on till his arms be on and his sword about him; then he is ready: especially in a time and posture of war, and the enemy lying nigh, even round about him; and this is every Christian's state while he is here. An *armor of light*, not only strong and useful, but comely and graceful, fit to walk abroad in, bright shining armor; as your old poets describe their champions, dazzling their enemies' eyes.

And thus apparelled, we are to behave ourselves suitably, to *walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness.* That is a night-work, as the apostle hath it, 1 Thess. v. 7. To stagger and reel in the streets in daylight, to be drunk in the morning, is most shameful: so is that spirit of drunkenness as unbeseeming a Christian; to see them hurrying and justling one another, as drunk with love of earthly things, and their spirits by that besotted and unfitted for spiritual things, that they find no pleasure in them.

*Chambering and wantonness.* All impure, lascivious conversation, how vile are these, and unfit for the light! Even nature is ashamed to be seen in these things, in the natural light of the day; much more will grace in the spiritual light of the gospel.

*Strife and envy.* As scuffles and hot quarrels are most of all unseemly in the streets in daylight, so, the quarrels and jarrings of Christians are very shameful before the light wherein they walk. The gospel of Christ, the grand doctrine thereof, is meekness and love. But oh! where are they, those graces that so abound in the doctrine of Christianity, and yet are so scarce in the lives of Christians? Where are they who look gladly on the good of others, and bear evils and injuries from their neighbors patiently, and repay evil with good? Thus it ought to be; but, on the contrary, how ready are the most to part on the least occasions, to bite and snarl at each other! There is more still of the spirit of the dragon, than

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of the dove. My brethren, remember and consider, that the gospel-light shines among us, and that more clearly than in former times, and more clearly than to most people in the world in these times; and do not outface and affront the blessed light with the accursed works of darkness. You might have been profane in former times, or in some other place, at a cheaper rate.

Know, that if this glorious light do not break off your course of sin, it will increase your load of judgment. The heaviest of all condemnations, is to live in darkness, and to live and die in it, in the midst of light. Among all your desperate accursed wishes, this shall be one, and a chief one, that either the Son of God had never come into the world, or that you had never heard of him.

Much of what we aim at, were gained, if Christians could be brought to consider who they are, and to walk like themselves: it would raise them above the base pleasures of sin, and the snares of the world. *The way of life is on high to the just:* there is a holy loftiness, a disdain of all impure sordid ways. It is said of Jehoshaphat, that *his heart was lift up in the ways of the Lord.* 2 Chron. xvii. 6. As a vain, self-conceited lifting up of the heart is the great enemy of our welfare (as it is written of another, even of a good king, Hezekiah, *that his heart was lift up, therefore was wrath upon him*); so there is a happy exaltation of the heart, when it is raised in God, to despise all communion with the unholy, and the unholy ways of the world. This, my brethren, is that which I would were wrought in you by the consideration of our holy calling. We are *called to holiness, and not to uncleanness.—Ye are the children of the light and of the day.* 1 Thess. iv. 7; v. 5. Base night ways, such as can not endure the light, do not become you. O that comeliness which the saints should study, that *decorum* which they should keep in all their ways, ευσχημονως, one action like another, and all like Christ, living as in the light. They that converse with the best company, such persons are obliged to more decency in apparel. We live in the light, in the company of angels of God, and Jesus Christ; and therefore should not act anything that is low or mean, unbeseeming the rank we keep, and the presence of those with whom we associate. When the king passes through the country in progress, they who see him seldom, being either to attend him in his way, or to receive him into their houses, will labor to have all things in the best order they can for the time; but they that live at court, and are daily in the king's presence, are constantly courtlike in their habit and carriage, and all about them. *O followers of the Lamb,* let your *garments* be always *white;* yea, let him be your garment; clothe yourselves with himself; have your robes made of his spotless fleece.

*Put on the Lord Jesus.* No resemblance is more usual than that of people's customs to their clothes, their habitudes to their habits. This the apostle used in the foregoing words, *Put on the* [furniture, or] *armor of light* having *cast off the works of darkness,* as clothes of darkness, night-clothes. And the word, *walking decently,* has something of the same resemblance contained in it. And here we have the proper beauty and ornament of Christians, even the Lord Jesus, recommended to them under the same notion, *Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.* Him we put on by faith, and are clothed with him as our righteousness. We come unto our Father in our Elder Brother's perfumed garments, and so obtain the blessing which he, in a manner, was stripped of for our sakes. He did undergo the curse, and *was made a curse* for our sakes: so the apostle speaks of him, Gal. iii. 13. We *put him on,* as *the Lord our righteousness,* and are made *the righteousness of God in him.* This investiture is first, when our persons are made acceptable, and we come into court. But there is another putting of him on, in the conformity of holiness, which always accompanies the former; and that is it which is here meant. And this I declare unto you, that whosoever does not *thus* put him on, shall find themselves deceived in the other, if they imagine it belongs to them.

They who are the sons of God, and have the hope of inheriting with Christ, do really become like him, are even heirs in some degree now; and that blessed expectation they have, is to be fully like him. 1 John iii. 3. *When he appears, we shall be like him,* saith the apostle. And in the meanwhile, they are endeavoring to be so, and somewhat attaining it; as he adds, *Every one that hath this hope, purifieth himself, as he is pure.* He is the only begotten Son, and we are so restored in him to the dignity of sons, that withal we are really changed into his likeness. He is the *image of the Father* that is renewed upon us.

It is the substance of religion, to be like him whom we worship.* Man's end and perfection is *likeness to God.* But oh, the distance, the unlikeness, yea, the contrariety, that is fallen upon our nature! *The carnal mind is enmity to God:* the soul is, as it were, become flesh, and so most unsuitable to the Father of Spirits; it is become like the beast that perishes. Now, to repair and raise us, this was the course taken: we could not rise up to God, he came down to us, yea into us, to raise and draw us up again to him. He became like us, that we might become like him. God first put on man, that man might put on God. Putting on the Lord Jesus, we put on man; but that man is God, and so, in putting on man, we put on God. Thus, putting on Christ, we put on all grace: we do this, not only by studying him as our copy and example, but by real participation of his Spirit; and that, so as that daily the likeness is growing, while we are carried by that

* *Summa religionis imitari quem colis.*



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Spirit to study his example, and enabled in some measure to conform to it; so that these two grow together, *growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.* He is the *armor of light* before spoken of: all our ornament and safety is in him. Some pictures of great persons you have seen, with arms and robes on at once: thus we, when clothed with Christ, have our arms and robes both on at once, yea, both in one, for he is both. So this is the great study of a Christian, to eye and read Christ much, and, by looking on him, to become more and more like him, making the impression deeper by each day's meditation and beholding of him. His Spirit in us, and that love his Spirit works, make the work easy, as sympathies do. And still the more the change is wrought, it becomes still the more easy to work it. This is excellently described by this apostle, 2 Corinthians iii. 18.

Now we see our business: oh that we had hearts to it! It is high, it is sweet, to be growing more and more Christ-like every day. What is the purchase or conquest of kingdoms to this? Oh, what are we doing, who mind not this more? Even they whose proper work it is, how remiss are they in it, and what small progress do they make! Are we less for the world and ourselves, and more for God, this year than the former?—more meek and gentle, abler to bear wrongs, and to do good for them, more holy and spiritual in our thoughts and ways, more abundant and fervent in prayer? I know there will be times of deadness, and winter seasons, even in the souls of living Christians; but it is not always so, it will come about yet; so that, take the whole course of a Christian together, he is advancing, putting on still more of Christ, and living more in him. There is a closer union between the soul and this its spiritual clothing, than between the body and its garments: that doth import a transformation into Christ, put on as a new life, or a new self. The Christian by faith doth this: he puts off himself, old carnal self, and instead thereof, puts on Jesus Christ, and thenceforward hath no more regard of that old self, than of old cast clothes, but is all for Christ, joys in nothing else. This is a mystery which can not be understood but by partaking of it.

My brethren, learn to have these thoughts frequent and occurrent with you on all occasions. Think, when about anything, how would Christ behave himself in this? Even so let me endeavor.

You will possibly say, they that speak thus, and advise thus, do not do thus. Oh, that that were not too true! Yet there be some that be sincere in it, and although it be but little that is attained, yet the very aim is excellent, and somewhat there is that is done by it. It is better to have such thoughts and desires, than altogether to give it up; and the very desire, being serious and sincere, does so much change the habitude and usage of the soul and life, that it is not to be despised.

Now follows, *And make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.* And it will follow necessarily. We hear much to little purpose. Oh, to have the heart touched by the Spirit with such a word as is here! It would untie it from all these things. These are the words, the very reading of which wrought so with Augustine, that, of a licentious young man, he turned a holy faithful servant of Jesus Christ. While you were without Christ, you had no higher nor other business to do, than to attend and serve the flesh; but once having put him on, you are other men, and other manners do become you. *Alia ætas alios mores postulat.*

This forbids not eating, and drinking, and clothing, and providing for these, nor decency and comeliness in them. The *putting on of Christ* does not bar the sober use of them; yea, the moderate providing for the necessities of the flesh, while thou art tied to dwell in it, that may be done in such a way as shall be a part of thy obedience and service to God. But to *lay in provision for the lusts of it*, is to victual and furnish his enemy and thine own; for the *lusts of the flesh* do strive against God's Spirit, and war against thy soul. Gal. v. 17; 1 Pet. ii. 11.

This was the quarrel between God and his own people in the wilderness. Bread for their *necessities*, he gave them, but they required meat for their *lusts* (which should rather have been starved to death than fed), and many of them fell in the quarrel. He gave them their desire, but gave them a plague with it, and they died with the meat between their teeth. Many who seem to follow God, and to have put on Christ, yet continuing in league with their lusts, and providing for them, they are permitted awhile so to do, and are not withheld from their desire, and seem to prosper in the business; but though not so sudden and sensible as that of the Israelites, there is no less certain a curse joined with all they purchase and provide for that unhallowed use. It is certainly the posture and employment of most of us, even who are called *Christians*, to be purveyors for the flesh, even for *the lusts of it* (*ad supervacuum sudare*); these lusts comprehending all sensual, and all worldly, fleshly, self-pleasing projects. Even some things that seem a little more decent and refined come under this account. What are men commonly doing but projecting and laboring, beyond necessity, for fuller and finer provision for *back and belly*, and to feed their pride, and raise themselves and theirs somewhat above the condition of others about them? And where men's interests meet in the teeth, and cross each other, there arise heart-burnings and debates, and an evil eye one against another, even on fancied prejudice, where there is nothing but crossing a humor. So the

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grand idol is their own will, that must be provided for and served in all things, that takes them up early and late, how they may be at ease, and pleased, and esteemed, and honored. This is the *making provision for the flesh and its lusts*, and from this are they all called who have *put on Christ;* not to a hard, mean, unpleasant life, instead of that other, but to a far more high and more truly pleasant life, that disgraces all those their former pursuits which they thought so gay while they knew no better. There is a transcendent sweetness in Christ, that puts the flesh out of credit. *Put on Christ*, thy robe royal, and *make no provision for the flesh;* surely thou wilt not then go and turmoil in the kitchen. A soul clothed with Christ, stooping to any sinful delight, or an ardent pursuit of anything earthly, though lawful, doth wonderfully degrade itself. Methinks it is as a king's son in his princely apparel, playing the scullion, sitting down to turn the spits. A soul living in Christ indeed, hath no vacancy for the superfluous, luxurious demands of flesh, yea, supplies the very necessities of it with a kind of regret. *A necessitatibus meis libera me, Domine*, said one: *Deliver me, Lord, from my necessities.*

Oh, raise up your spirits, you that pretend to anything in Christ; delight in him, and let his love satisfy you at all times. What need you go a begging elsewhere? All you would add, makes you the poorer, abates so much of your enjoyment of him; and what can compensate that? *Put on the Lord Jesus*, and then view yourselves, and see if you be fit to be the slaves of flesh and earth.

These two, *Put on the Lord Jesus*, and *Make no provision*, are directly the representation of the church, Apoc. xii. A woman clothed with the sun, and having the moon under her feet, needed borrow no beauty from it, or anything under it. She left the scarlet, and the purple, and the gold, to the harlot after spoken of, for her dressing.

The service of the flesh is a work the Christian can not fold to, till he forgets what clothes he has on. This is all, my brethren. Oh that we could be once persuaded to *put on Christ*, and then resolve and remember to do nothing unbeseeming that attire!

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## SERMON XX.

### OBSERVATION OF PROVIDENCE.

### Psalm cvii. 43.

**Who is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.**

Most men live in a brutal sensitive life, live not so much as the life of reason; but far fewer the Divine life of faith, which is farther above common reason than that is above sense. The spiritual light of grace is that which makes day in the soul: all other wisdom is but night-light. *Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.* Eccl. ii. 13. This higher sort of knowledge is that the prophet speaks of.

Having discoursed excellently through the Psalm of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, so legible in his providence toward men, and often called up the dull minds of men to consider these his works, and bless him for them, he closes with this applaudment of their happiness that truly do so, *Whoso is wise, &c.*

They that spake it knew not how true their speech is, who have called the world *a nest of fools.* It is true, there is very little even of natural clearness of judgment among men, but surely far less of this true spiritual wisdom. So that if we read this as a question, *Whoso is wise?*—Oh, how few are there! And yet, most imagine they are; few are convinced they are fools, and that is the height of their folly. That word is most true, Job xi. 12; *Vain man would be wise, though he be born as the wild ass's colt.* In youth, he runs wild, unbroken, and unuseful; and in fuller age, hath but a brutish, slavish life, yokes in with beasts in the same kind of labor; or in little better; turmoiling and drudging to serve his base lusts, his gain, his pleasure, and forgets quite what high condition the soul that sparkles within him is born to, and made capable of. In a word, he knows not God. That is both his folly and his misery. How much of life passes ere we consider what we live for! And though all applied, how incapable are a great many to know anything! *Inter homines quid homine rarius!* Among men what more rare than *man*, a truly rational being? To this purpose there is a notable word, Job xi. 8, 9.

Now, to stir up your desires and endeavors after this wisdom, consider that it is the proper excellency of the rational nature, the true elevation of human nature, to be wise. And they are not such, and know somewhat of their own defect, yet would willingly pass for such, and had rather be accounted uncomely, yea, even dishonest, than unwise (call a man anything rather than a fool); but yet, if they could, would rather have the thing than the reputation of it, and desire really to be wise if it were in their power.

Now it were good to work on this design within us, and to have it drawn into the right channel. Would you be wise? Then, seek true wisdom. What most men seek and admire in themselves and others are but false shadows and appearances of wisdom; the knowledge either of base, low things, as to scrape and gather together, or else of vain, unprofitable things, and such knowledge as is for the most part but imaginary. For most things in state affairs take another bias and course, are not so much modelled by wit, as most men imagine. And for the secrets of nature we have little certain knowledge of them

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How short is our life to attain any knowledge! That is an excellent word, Job viii. 8. But the knowledge here set before us, is the best kind of knowledge, that of the highest things, Divine things. I say the best kind of knowledge of them, for there are notions even of these things, that have little in them; either curious, fruitless disputations of such points as are most removed both from our notice and our use, or a useless knowledge of useful things. But this is a well-regulated and sure-footed knowledge of Divine things, as God himself hath revealed them.

This wisdom descends from above; therefore for the attainment of it, these two things are necessary: 1st, To know that we want it, sensibly and feelingly to know this, that we know nothing of the things of God. *Multi ad sapientiam pervenirent, nisi se jamjam pervenisse arbitrarentur: Many men would have attained to wisdom, if they had not fancied or imagined that they had already attained it.* I speak not now of the lowest sort, the grossly, the brutishly ignorant even of the letter of Divine truths, but such as can give themselves or others, if put to it, a good account of the principles of faith and holiness, have read and heard much, and possibly learned and retained not a little that way, yet still are but ignorants, strangers to this heavenly wisdom. Therefore men must first know this, that they must go anew to school again, and become as little children. Wisdom invites no other. *Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither.* Prov. ix. 4. The *strange woman*, and so, all the enticements to sin, they invite the same persons (ver. 16), but to a directly opposite end: she calls the fools to befool them, to drown them in folly and wretchedness; but wisdom calls them, to unbefool them, to recover them and teach them the way of life.

2dly. Being convinced and sensible of the want of it, to use the right way to attain it, to give all diligent attendance on the word and ordinances of God, to desire it of him. Desire is all: if you desire much, you shall have much. Vent thy desire this way heavenward, whence this wisdom descends. This light springs from on high. Man can not raise himself to it without another. James i. 5. *If any man lack wisdom*—if he is but once sensible of that, why then the sweetest, easiest way to attain it than can be desired, is pointed out—*let him ask it of God, who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not;* does neither harshly refuse, nor upbraidingly give it, but delights to give it to them that ask it, even his own Holy Spirit, the spring of this wisdom, as he hath promised.

We are all too little in this humble seeking and begging of this Divine knowledge, and that is the cause we are so shallow and small proficients. *If thou cry, and lift up thy voice for understanding, if thou search for it as for hid treasures.* Prov. ii. 3. Sit down upon thy knees and dig for it; that is the best posture to fall right upon the golden vein and go deepest to know the mind of God, in searching the Scriptures, to be directed and regulated in his ways, to be made skilful in ways of honoring him, and doing him service. This neither men nor angels can teach him, but God alone. *For the Lord giveth wisdom.* Ver. 6.

Of this wisdom we have here the *character* and the *privilege*.

I. The *character: Whoso will observe these things.* That looks back to the doctrine of the psalmist, which is very divinely sweet. He had been extolling the goodness of God in general, in his dealings with men, and instancing, in divers occurrent and remarkable particulars, the fitness and mildness of his chastisements, the seasonableness and sweetness of his deliverances, as correcting us for our greater good, and relieving us in our greatest need, when we are nearest despairing of relief. This is exemplified in travellers and prisoners, in sick men and seamen, and in the various disposal of the state of all sorts of persons, the highest and the meanest; and the repeated sweet burden of the song is *O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!* And in the end, he declares the result of all, ver. 42, the joy of the godly, the shame and silencing of the wicked, who usually either mistake, or slight, or despise the providence of God in the rule of human affairs, who readily speak big their own thoughts, which are vain, promising themselves continual success. In the end he shall clear himself, and gladden the souls of his people, and clothe his enemies with shame. Wait a while, and thus it shall be; they shall change places. *He pours contempt upon princes,* and *sets the poor on high from affliction,* and so rights himself and them that wait on him. Then *the righteous shall see it and rejoice, and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.* And it is a great point of true wisdom, rightly to observe these things.

This observing hath in it, first, a believing notice of these things, to take such instances aright, when they meet our eye, to know these things to be indeed the Lord's doings: and so, when we are in any present strait, to believe, accordingly, the same inspection of his eye, and secret conduct of his hand, to be in all. Now it is a great point to have the heart established in these persuasions. We are generally much defective in this, and they most who least suspect themselves of it. But withal, the observing or *keeping* of these things (so the word is), this firm believing, hath in it these two following on it, and flowing from it, *serious contemplation* and *suitable action*.

1. To observe these things, is often to turn our eye to the view of these things, and to keep it on them, so as to have our hearts warmed with them, to be deeply taken with

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wonder and love. But alas! our souls are drowned in flesh, dragged down from things that become them, and are worthy of them, to drudge and weary themselves in the mire and clay. How few are there who make it a great part of their daily business to behold God in his works and ways with themselves and others! Some, in respect of others, are called *great spirits;* but oh, what are they? What a poor greatness is it to project, for a great estate, or great places and titles, or to conceive great revenges of little wrongs! There is something, even in nature, of greatness of spirit, very far beyond the bastard, false character that most take of it, and that is above most things others imagine great, and despise them. But true greatness is this, to have a mind much taken up with the greatness of God, admiring and adoring him, and exciting others to do so; grieved, and holily angry, that men regard him so little, breathing forth such wishes as these of the psalmist, both to express their own thoughts, and to awake sleeping besotted men about them: *O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness*, &c. They could wish a voice that could reach many thousands; and if they had one audible to all the world, would use it no otherwise than to be precentors of the praises of God, to call up and begin the song, *O that men would praise*, &c.

Consider yourselves, my brethren, and trace yourselves into your own hearts, whether often in the day your thoughts run this way, finding the meditation of God sweet to you, or whether they do not run out much more to vain things, and are seldom here: either hurried and busied in a surcharge of affairs, or, if vacant, yet spinning themselves out in frothy, foolish fancies, that you would be ashamed to look back upon. You might entertain Divine and heavenly thoughts even while about your earthly employments and refreshments; but this is little known and little sought after. Make it your business to learn more of this wisdom. Call in your hearts, commune often with yourselves and with God; be less abroad, and more within, and more above. It is by far the sweetest life. Beg of God to wind up your hearts, when you find them heavy and dull, that they follow you slowly in this, and need much pulling and hauling from your hand: a touch from his hand will make them mount up easily and nimbly. Oh! seek his drawing: *Draw me, I will run after thee.* And when you meet together, let this be your business, to speak of Him who alone is to be exalted, who doth and disposeth all as he pleases. Say to friends, and kindred, and neighbors, "Oh, how great and how gracious a God have we! Oh, that we could bless him!"

2. To keep these things is to walk according to the firm belief and frequent thoughts of them; to fear him, and to walk humbly and warily, because our follies draw on his rods, and to study to please him, and no matter who be displeased; and when he corrects, to fall down humbly under his hand, who hath our sickness and health, our life and death, and all that concerns us, in his absolute power. If anything advance or advantage us before others, endeavor to be the more lowly and serviceable to him. If in a low condition, still bless and reverence him, for his presence will turn the meanest cottage, yea, the darkest dungeon, into a palace.

The chief delight of the saints is, to offer praises to God, to gather them in from all his works, to send up to him. And his chief delight in all his works is to receive these praises of them from their hands: they articulate them, make a reasonable sacrifice of them. Psalm cxlv. 10: *All thy works shall praise thee, and thy saints shall bless thee.* We are called to this high work, yet lie behind, and most unworthily and foolishly debase ourselves in other things. But they that are wise, if there be any, will mind this, will not let the Lord's marvellous and gracious doings pass without notice.

II. The *privilege* of this wisdom. It is a high proof of his love to us, that he loves to be seen working by us, and stoops to take our acclamations and approbation, hath such regard to them, and rewards them so richly, even thus: *Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.* Observe, *They that are wise, and observe, shall understand* further. *To him that hath, shall be given*; to him that *usefully hath.* That is *to have*, and so it is there meant; to him that improves it to his advantage who gave it. The greatest difficulty is to begin: as one said of his growing rich, that "He came hardly by a little riches, and easily by great riches." Having once got a stock, he grew rich apace. So once taking, be it but the first lessons of this wisdom, learning these well, shall facilitate thy knowledge exceedingly. *The wise increaseth learning.* Prov. i. 5. Wouldst thou but receive and hearken to the easiest things represented by God, these would enlighten and enlarge thy soul to receive more; especially, walking by the light thou hast, be it ever so little, that invites and draws in more. Be diligent in the practice of what you know, if you would know more. Believe it, that is the way to grow. *Whoso observes*, keeps these things, acts according to the knowledge of them (as John vii. 17), *he shall understand*, shall understand it by finding it. *They shall understand it in themselves* (the word is in the reciprocal mood, *Hithpahel*); it shall be particularly and effectually shown unto them they shall experience it, and so understand it, and that is the only lively understanding of it. Men may hear, yea, deliver large discourses of it, and yet not understand the thing Happy are they to whom this is given! *Solus docet qui dat, et discit qui recipit:* He alone teaches who gives, and he learns who receives.

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*Loving kindness.* (Heb. *graciousness.*) All sorts of kindnesses, even outward and common mercies, in those shall he understand his goodness: in recoveries and deliverances from dangers, and temporal blessings, be their portion in them less or more, though the things be common, yet they come to be his own by a particular stamp of love, which to others they have not. And the children of God know it, they can find it out, and can read it, though the world that looks on it can not. And indeed, to them, the lowest things are disposed of, in order to the highest: their daily bread is given them by that same love that gives them Christ: all is given in him. So the curse is taken away, and all is sweetened with a blessing. *A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the abundance of the wicked.*

But the things they chiefly prize and desire, as indeed they deserve so to be, are of another sort: in their very being and nature, are love-tokens, effects of that peculiar free-grace that chose them to life. And this is called the *light of God's countenance. His everlasting love.* Now *they that are wise, and observe these things, they shall understand* this *loving kindness.* Not that they first are thus *wise,* before they partake of this loving kindness; no: by it this *wisdom* was given them; but this promise is made to their improvement of that gift, and walking in those ways of *wisdom.* Not only are they loved of God, but they shall *understand* it. He will manifest himself to them, and tell them he loves them. And the more they walk in these ways, the more clearly shall they perceive and powerfully find his love manifested to them.

This is the highest inducement that can be to such as have any interest in it. When this love hath but once touched them, though as yet they know it not certainly, yet it works that esteem and affection that nothing can be admitted into comparison with it. While carnal men wallow in the puddle, these are the crystal streams a renewed soul desires to bathe in, even the love of God. O! let me find that; no matter what I have, or what I want. In poverty, or any distressed, forsaken condition, one good word or good look from him, makes me up. I can sit down content and cheerful, and rejoice in that, though all the world frown on me, and all things look dark and comfortless about me, that is a piece of heaven within the soul. Now, of this experimental, understanding knowledge of this love, there are different degrees; there is a great latitude in this. To some are afforded, at some times, little glimpses and inlets of it in a more immediate way; but these stay not: *Suavis hora, sed brevis mora.* Others are upheld in the belief of it, and live on it by faith; though it shine not so clear, yet a light they have to walk by. Though the sun shines not bright out to them all their life, yet they are led home, and understand so much love in their way, as shall bring them to the fulness of it in the end. Others, having passed most of the day, have a fair glimpse in the very evening or close of it. But, howsoever, they that walk in this way by this light, whatsoever measure they have of it, are led by it to the land of light. The connexion here made, you see, *They that wisely observe these things, shall understand this loving kindness.* A wise man observing of God's ways, and ordering our own to his mind, is the certain way to attain much experienced knowledge or his love.

This love is most free, and, from the beginning to the end, works of itself; but in the method of it, God hath thus linked things together, made one portion of grace, in the use of it, draw on another. And this his children should prudently consider. There is such a like speech, Ps. l. 23: *Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God.*

The *contemplation* of God in his works sets the soul open to receive the influences of this love: by looking toward him, draws his eye toward it, as one look of love draws on another. Certainly many that have some desire of the light of God's countenance, and evidences of his love, yet, in not applying their souls to consider him, do much injure themselves.

Heavenly thoughts do refine the soul, as fire works itself higher and to a purer flame by stirring. To be blessing God for his goodness, giving him praise in the view of his works in the world, and for his church, and particularly for ourselves, this both disposes the heart to a more suitable temper for receiving Divine comforts, and invites him to let them flow into it. For if he have such acknowledgments for general goodness and common mercies, how much larger returns shall he have upon the discoveries of special love! Is it a sight of God as reconciled thou wouldst have? Now, praise sets a man among the angels, and they behold his face.

Again, *action,* walking in his ways humbly and carefully, and so waiting, never wants a successful return of much love. How can he who is goodness itself, hide and reserve himself from a soul that yields up itself to him, hath no delight but to please him, hates and avoids what may offend him? This, surely, is the way, if there is any under heaven, to enjoy communion with him.

They that forget him, and disregard their ways, and are no way careful to order them to his liking, do but delude themselves with mistaken fancies of mercy. I beseech you, be warned. There can not be solid peace in the ways of sin: *no peace to the wicked, saith my God.* Outward common favors you may share for a time; but these have a curse with them to you, and you shall quickly be at an end of these receipts; and then you would look toward him for some persuasions of his

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loving kindness, but are likely to find nothing but frowns and displeasure. O! *consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you.*

Even they who have some title to this love of God, and are desiring further evidence of it, yet do often sit exceedingly in their own light, and work against their end, still bent on that assurance they would have, and yet neglecting the way to it, which certainly is in a manner to neglect itself. Were they more busied in honoring God, doing him what service they can in their station, striving against sin, acknowledging his goodness to the world, and even to themselves, that they are yet in the region of hope, not cut off in their iniquities, thus *offering praise*, and *ordering their conversation aright*, submitting unto him, and giving him glory; their assurances and comforts, in the measure he thinks fit, would come in due time, and sooner in this way than in any other they could take.

Observe these things, beware of sin, and *ye shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.* It is true, this love of God changes not, nor hangs on thy carriage, nor on anything without itself; yea, all our good hangs on it; but know, as to the knowledge and apprehension of it, it depends much on the holy frame of thy heart and the exact regulation of thy ways. Sin obstructs and darkens all; those are the clouds and mists; and where any believer is adventurous on the ways of sin, he shall smart for it. Where sin is, there will be a storm, as Chrysostom's word is of Joshua.* The experience of all witnesseth this. No strength of faith will keep out floods of doubting and troublous thoughts, where any novel sin hath opened a gap for them to rush in by. See David, Psalm li., expressing himself as if all were to begin again, his joy taken away, and his bones broken, and to sense all undone: nothing will serve but a *new creature. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*

There is a congruity in the thing itself, and God hath so ordered it, that vexation and anguish should still attend sin, and the ways of holiness be ways of peace. Say men what they will, great falls leave wounds and smart behind them, and they must be washed with sharper liquor before balm and oil be poured into them. And not only will more notorious breaches disturb thy peace, but a tract of careless and fruitless walking. If thou abate of thy attendance on God, and thy fear cool toward him, lagging and falling downward to something you are caring for and taken with, you shall find an estrangement: it may be insensible at first and for a while because of thy sloth, that thou dost not observe diligently how it is with thee; but after a time, it shall be more easily known, but more hardly mended. And there are none of us but might find much more of God in this our way homeward, if the foolishness and wanderings of our hearts did not prevent us.

Be persuaded, then, you whose hearts he hath wrought for himself, to attend better on him, and the advantage shall be yours, doubt it not. And though for a time you find it not, yet wait on, and go on in that way; it shall not disappoint you. The more you let go of the false, vain comforts of the world for his sake, the more richly you shall be furnished with his. Oh! we make not room for them; that is the great hinderance. Consider him, behold his works, bless him, confess him always worthy of *praise for his goodness and his wonderful works to the children of men*, however he deal with thee in particular; and assuredly, he shall deal graciously with thee, and ere long thou shalt find it, and be forced to acknowledge it. Though it may be thou want these bright shinings of comforts thou wouldst have, yet, looking to him, and walking before him, *observing these things*, thou shalt have of his light to lead thee on, and a calm within; sweet peace, not that height of joy thou desirest.

There are often calm, fair days without storm, though it be not so clear sunshine; and in such days a man may travel comfortably. I would have Christians called off from a perplexed over-pressing of this point of their particular assurance. If we were more studious to please him, forgetting ourselves, we should find him remember us the more; yet, we should not do so for this either, but simply for himself. In a word, this is thy wisdom; mind thy duty, and refer to him thy comfort.

* Ὅπου ἁμαρτία ἐκεῖ χειμών.

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## SERMON XXI.

### IMPERFECTION AND PERFECTION.

### Psalm cxix. 96.

I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad.

Grace is a divine light in the soul, and shows the true colors of things. The apostle overshoots not when he says, *The spiritual man judgeth all things.* He hath undeniably the advantage: he may judge of natural things, but the natural man can not judge of spiritual things. Yea, the truest judgment of natural things, in respect to our chiefest end, springs particularly from spiritual wisdom: that makes the true parallel of things, and gives a just account of their differences, as here.

*I have seen an end*, &c.] All that have any measure of spiritual light, are of this mind; but certainly, they that are more eminently blessed with it, have a more high and clearer view of both parts. David, who is generally, and with greatest likelihood, supposed to the author of this Psalm, was

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singularly advantaged to make this judgment of things. He had, no doubt, a large measure of the knowledge of God, and of his law, which here he declares to be so large; and being both a wise and a great man, might know more than most others, even of all other perfections—might trace them to their utmost, and see their *end*, as he expresses it. This same verdict we have from his son Solomon, after much experience in all things; who, having the advantage of peace and riches, did particularly set himself to this work, to a most exact inquiry after all things of this earth. He set nature on the rack, to confess its utmost strength for the delighting and satisfying of man; with much pains and art, he extracted the very spirit of all, and after all, he gives the same judgment we have here; his book writ on that subject, being a paraphrase on this sentence, dilating the sense, and confirming the truth of it. It carries its own sum in those two words which begin and end it: the one, *Vanity of vanities all is vanity*, and the other, *Fear God and keep his commandments, for that is the whole duty of man*. And these here are just the equivalent of those two; the former of that beginning word, *I have seen an end of all perfection;* and the latter of that concluding one. *But thy commandment is exceeding broad.*

When mean men speak of this world's greatness, and poor men cry down riches, it passes but for a querulous, peevish humor, to discredit things they can not reach, or else an ignorant contempt of things they do not understand; or, taking it a little further, but a self-pleasing shift, a willingly undervaluing of those things of purpose to allay the displeasure of the want of them; or at the best, if something of truth and goodness be in the opinion, yet, that the assent of such persons is (like the temperance of sickly bodies), rather a virtue made of necessity, than embraced of free choice. But to hear a wise man, in the height of these advantages, proclaim their vanity, yea, kings from the very thrones whereon they sit in their royal robes, give forth this sentence upon all the glories and delights about them, is certainly above all exception. Here are two, the father and the son; the one raised from a mean condition to the crown, instead of a shepherd's staff, to wield a sceptre, and that, after many afflictions and dangers in the way to it, which, to some palates, gives a higher relish and sweetness to honor, than if it had slid on them before they could feel it, in the cheap, easy way of an undoubted succession. Or, if any think David's best days a little cloudy, by the remains of insurrections and oppositions, in that case usual; as the jumbling of the water is not fully quieted for a while after the same is over; then, take the son, succeeding to as fair a day as heart can wish, both a complete calm of peace, and a bright sunshine of riches and regal pomp, and he able to improve these to the highest. And yet, both these are perfectly of the same mind in this great point. The son having peace and time for it, though a king, would make his throne a pulpit, and be a preacher of this one doctrine, to which the fathers sentence is the fittest text I have seen.

The words give an account of a double prospect; the latter being, as it were, the discovery of a new world after the travelling over the old, expressed in the former clause: *I have seen an end of all perfection*, i. e., taken in an exact view of all other things, and seen their end; *but thy commandment* is of exceeding extent and perfection, and I see but a part, and there is no end of it.

*I have seen an end.*] I have tried and made experiment of much of what this world affords, and the rest I see to the uttermost of it, how far it reaches. The psalmist, as standing on a vantage ground, sees clearly round about him the farthest horizon of earthly excellencies and advantages, and finds them not to be infinite or unmeasurable; sees that they are bounded, yea, what their bounds are, how far they go at their very farthest, *an end of all*, even of perfection. And this is in effect what I find, that their end stops short of satisfaction. A man may think and desire beyond them, yea, not only *may*, but *must:* he can not be terminated by their bounds, will still have a stretch farther, and feels them leave him, and then finds a void. All which he says most ponderously in these short words, giving the world the slight thus: It is not so great a matter as men imagine it; the best of it I have examined, and considered it to the full, taken the whole dimension: all the profits and pleasures under the sun, their utmost goes but a short way; the soul is vaster than all, can look and go much farther.

I will not attempt the particulars, to reckon all, or be large in any: the preacher, Solomon, hath done this matchlessly, and *who is he that can come after the king?* If any be sick of that poor disease, esteem of riches, he can tell you the utmost of these, that *when they increase, they are increased that eat them, and what good is to the owners thereof, save the beholding of them with their eyes?* Eccl. v. 11. Yea, locking them up, and not using them, and still gathering, and all to no use, this is a madness: it is all one as if they were still in the mines under the ground, and the difference none, but in turmoiling pains in gathering and tormenting care in keeping. But take the best view of them, supposing that they be used, that is, spent on family and retinue, why then, what hath the owner but the sight of them for himself? Out of all his dishes, he fills but one belly. Of all his fair houses and richly-furnished rooms, he lodges but in one at once. And if his great rent be needful for his great train, or any other ways of expense, is it an advantage to need much? Or is he not rather poorer who needs five or six thousand pounds by year, than he that needs but one hundred?

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Of all the festivities of the world and delights of sense, the result is, *laughter is mad;* and mirth, and orchards, and music, these things pass away as a dream, and are still to begin again. And so gross and earthly are they, that for the beasts they may be a fit good, but for a divine, immortal soul, they can not. A horse lying at ease in a fat pasture, may be compared with those that take delight in them.

Honor and esteem are yet vainer than those pleasures and riches that furnish them. Though they be nothing but wind, compared ed to solid soul-delights, yet, as to nature, there is in them somewhat more real than in the fame of honor: which is no more, indeed, than an airy, imaginary thing, and hangs more on others than anything else, and not only on persons above them, but even those below; especially that kind which the vanity of man is much taken with, all popular opinion, than which there is nothing more light and poor, and that is more despised by the elevated sort of natural spirits, a thing as unworthy as it is inconstant. No slavery like the affecting of vulgar esteem; it enthrals the mind to all sorts. Often the worthiest share least in it. See Eccl. ix. 11–15. True worth is but sometimes honored, but always envied. Eccl. iv. 4, *Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbor.* And with whomsoever it is thou seekest to be esteemed, be it with the multitude, or more chiefly with the wiser and better sort, what a narrow thing is it at largest! How many nations know neither thee, nor those who know thee!

Beyond all these things is inward worth, and even that natural wisdom such as some minds have to a far more refined height than others. A man by it sees round about him, yea, and within himself. That Solomon grants to be an excellent thing, Eccl. iv., yet presently finds the end of that perfection, ver. 16. That guards not from disasters and vexations; yea, there is in it an innate grief, amid so many follies. Eccl. i. 18. *In much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow.* Yea, give a man the confluence of all these, which is so rare, make him at once rich, and honorable, and healthful, and encompassed with all the delights of nature and art, and wise to make the best improvement of all they can well afford (and there is much in that), yet there *is an end of these perfections.* For there is quickly an end of himself who hath them: he dies, and that spoils all. Death breaks the strings, and that ends the music. And the highest of natural wisdom, which is the soul of all nature's advantages, that ends them, whether practical or political. In that day are all state projects and high thoughts laid low, if speculative. For, in spite of all sciences and knowledge of nature, a man goes out in the dark; and if thou art learned in many languages, one death silences all thy tongues at once. So says Solomon, Eccl. ii. 16, *And how dieth the wise man? as a fool.* Yea, suppose a man were not broken off, but continued still in the top of all these perfections; yea, imagine much more, the chiefest delights of sense that have ever been found out, more solid and certain knowledge of nature's secrets, all moral composure of spirit, the highest dominion, not only over men, but a deputed command over nature's frame, the course of all the heavens, and the affairs of all the earth, and that he was to abide in this estate; yet would he see *an end of this perfection,* that is, it would come short of making him happy. It is a union with a Higher Good by that love that subjects all things to him, that alone is the endless perfection: *Thy commandment is exceeding broad.*

You may think this a beaten subject, and possibly, that some other cases or questions were fitter for Christians. I wish it were more needless. But, oh, the deceitfulness of our hearts! Even such as have shut out the vanities of this world at the fore-gate, let them in again, or some part of them at least, at the postern. Few hearts clearly come off untied from all, but are still lagging after somewhat; and thence so little delight in God, in prayer and holy things. And though there be no fixed esteem of other things, yet that indisposition to holy ways, argues some sickly humor latent in the soul; and therefore this is almost generally needful, that men be called to consider what they seek after. Amid all thy pursuits, stop and ask thy soul, For what end is all this? At what do I aim? For surely, by men's heat in these lower things, and their cold indifference for heaven, it would seem we take our portion to be here. But, oh, miserable portion at the best! Oh! short-lived happiness! Look on them and learn to see this, the *end of all perfections,* and to have an eye beyond them, till your hearts be well weaned from all things under the sun. Oh! there is little acquaintance with the things that are above it, little love of them, still some pretensions, some hopes that flatter us—"I will attain this or that; and then"—Then what? What if *this night, thou fool, thy soul shall be required of thee?*

*But thy commandment.*] The former part of this sentence hath within every man's breast somewhat to suit with it and own it. Readily, each man according to his experience and the capacity of his soul, hath his sense, if awake, of the unsatisfactoriness of all this world. Give him what thou wilt, yet, still there is empty room within, and a pain in that emptiness, and so, vexation, a tormenting windiness in all. And men of more contemplative minds have higher and clearer thoughts of this argument and matter, and may rise to a very high moral contempt of the world; and some of them have done so.



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But this other part is more sublime, and peculiar to a divine illumination. That which we find not *without*, we would have *within*, and would work out of ourselves what can not be extracted from things about us. Philosophy is much set on this, but it is upon a false scent, and so still deluded. No, it *is* without us; not within us, but above us. That fulness is in God, and there is no communion with him, or enjoyment of him, but in the way of his commandment. Therefore, this is the discovery that answers and satisfies, *Thy commandment is exceeding broad.*

*Commandment.*] He speaks of all as one, I conceive, for that tie and connexion of them all, on account of which he that breaks one, is guilty of all. A rule they are, and are so one, as a rule must be. One authority runs through all: that is the golden thread they are strung on. Break that anywhere, and all the pearls drop off. Psalm cxix. 6: *Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments.* Otherwise one piece shames another, like uneven and incongruous ways. The legs of the lame not being even, make an unseemly going. And as it is here, so a plural word is joined with the singular, ver. 137, and Psalm cxxxii.* And it is fitly here spoken of as *one* opposed to all varieties and multitudes of things beside. *Thy commandment*, each linked to one another, and that one chain reaches beyond all the incoherent perfections in the world, if one were added to another, and drawn to a length. This *commandment is exceeding broad;* the very *breadth* immense, and therefore the *length* must be much more so, no end of it. That good to which it leads and joins the soul, is enough for it: it is complete and full in its nature, and endless in its continuance, so that there is no measuring, no end of it any way. But all other *perfections* have their bounds of being, and period of duration, so that each way an end is to be found of them. Now, in this, the opposition is the more admirable, that he speaks not expressly of the enjoyment of God, but of the commandment of God: he extols that above all the perfections of the world. Which is much to be remarked, as having in it a clear character of the purest and highest love. It had been more obvious to all, had he said, I have seen the utmost of all besides thee, but thou, O God, the light of thy countenance, the blessed vision of thy face, that alone is boundless and endless happiness. Or, to have taken it below the full perfect enjoyment of glory, but some glances let into the soul here, a comfortable word from God, a look of love, oh, how far surpassing all the continued caresses and delights of the world! He speaks not of that neither, but *Thy commandment is exceeding broad.* As the apostle says, *The foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom*, 1 Cor. i. 25, so here, that of God which seems lowest and hardest, is infinitely beyond whatsoever is highest and sweetest in the world. The obeying of his commands, his very service, is more profitable than the world's rewards; his commands more excellent that the perfection of the world's enjoyments. To be subject to him, is truer happiness than to command the whole world. Pure love reckons thus: Though no further reward were to follow obedience to God, the perfection of his creature and its very happiness, carries its full recompense in it own bosom. Yea, love delights most in the hardest services. It is self-love, to love the embraces and rest of love; but it is love to him indeed to love the love the labor of love, and the service of it, and that, not so much because it leads to rest, and ends in it, but because it is service to him whom we love. Yea, that labor is itself a rest, it is so natural and sweet to a soul that loves. As the revolution of the heavens, which is a motion in rest, and rest in motion, changes not place, though running still; so, the motion of love is truly heavenly, and circular still in God, beginning in him, and ending in him, and so, not ending, but still moving without weariness.

Let us see what the commandment is, and that will clear it, for it is nothing but love. All is in that one, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*, &c. So, the *command* that is here called so broad, is *love*. There is no measuring that, for its object is immeasurable. We readily exceed in the love of any other thing; but in the love of God there is no danger of exceeding. Its true measure is, to know no measure.

According as the love is, so is the soul: it is made like to, yea, it is made one with, that which it loves. *Si terram amas, terra es: si Deum amas, quid vis ut dicam, Deus es?* [Augustine.] By loving gross, base things, it becomes gross, and turns to flesh, or earth; and so, by the love of God, it is made divine, is one with him. So this is the excellency of the command enjoining love. God hath a good-will to all his creatures; but that he should make a creature capable of loving him, and appoint this for his command, oh! herein his goodness shines brightest. Now, though fallen from this, we are again invited to it; though degenerated and accursed in our sinful nature, yet we are renewed in Christ, and this command is renewed in him, and a new way of fulfilling it is pointed out.

This *command is broad.* There is room enough for the soul in God, that is hampered and pinched in all other things. Here, *love with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.* Stretch it to the utmost; there is enough for it here

* Deum tradunt Hebræi, unâ voce, eloquio uno, *hoc est*, uno spiritu et halitu, sine ullâ interspiratione, morâ, pausâ, vel distinctione, ita ut omnia verba, tanquam verbum unum, et vox una, fuerant, elocutum. Atque hinc volunt duplicem illam accentuum rationem in Decalogo ortam, ut altera una, illa Dei continuata elocutio, altera hominum tarda et distincta, judicetur.

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while it must contract and draw itself to other things. *I will walk at liberty*, says David, *for I seek thy precepts.* That which perverse nature judges thraldom, once truly known, is only freedom. This is because the law is love, and such a love as brings full content to the soul. Man hath not an object of love besides God; too many he hath that can torment and trouble him, but not one that by being loved by him, satisfies and quiets him. Whether he loves things without him, or himself, still he is pained and restless. All other things he loves naturally, in reference to himself: but himself is not a sufficient object for him. It must be something that adds to, and perfects his nature, to which he must be united in love: somewhat higher than himself, yea, the highest of all, the Father of Spirits. That alone completes a spirit and blesses it, to love him, the spring of spirits.

Now this love, as including obedience to his commands, is a thing in itself due and expressly commanded too. This is the thing which surpasseth all pursuits and all enjoyments under heaven, not only to be loved of God, but to love him. Yea, could these be severed, this rather would be the deformity and misery of the creature, to hate him: this is the hell of hell.

And to love him, not only with complacency, a desire to enjoy him, but, moreover, wishing him glory, doing him service, desiring he may be honored by all his creatures, and endeavoring ourselves to honor him, that is our work; applauding the praises of angels and all creatures, and adding our (as Psalm ciii. 22) sweet, willing, entire submission to his will, ready to do, to suffer anything for him. Oh! away all base, muddy pleasures, all false night-shows of earthly glories, all high attempts and heroic virtues! These have their measure and their close, and prove in the end but lies. This command, this love alone, is the endless perfection and delight of souls, which begins here, and is completed above. The happiness of glory is the perfection of holiness: that is the full beauty and loveliness of the Spouse, the Lamb's wife.

Oh! how much are the multitudes of men to be pitied, who are hunting they know not what, still pursuing content, and it still flying before, and they at as great a distance as when they promised themselves to lay hold on it! It is strange what men are doing. *Ephraim feedeth on the wind.* Hos. xii. 1. The most serious designs of men are more foolish than the play of children: all the difference is, that these are *tristes ineptiæ*, sourer and more sad trifles.

Oh, that ye would turn this way, and not still lay out your *money for that which is not bread!* You would find the saddest part of a spiritual course of life hath under it more true sweetness than all your empty mirths, which sound much, and are nothing, like the *crackling of thorns under the pot.* There is more joy in enduring a cross for God, than in the smiles of the world; in a private, despised affliction, without the name of suffering for his cause, or anything it like martyrdom, but only as coming from his hand, kissing it, and bearing it patiently, yea, gladly for his sake, out of love to him because it is his will so to try thee. What can come amiss to a soul thus composed?

I wish that they who have renounced the vain world, and have the face of their hearts turned Godward, would learn more this happy life and enjoy it more, not to hang so much upon sensible comforts, as to delight in obedience, and to wait for those at his pleasure, whether he gives much or little, any or none. Learn to be still finding the sweetness of his commands, which no outward or inward change can disrelish, rejoicing in the actings of that Divine love within thee. Continue thy conflicts with sin, and though thou mayest at times be foiled, yet, cry to him for help, and getting up, redouble thy hatred of it and attempts against it. Still stir this flame of God. That will overcome: *Many waters can not quench it.* It is a renewed pleasure, to be offering up thyself every day to God. Oh! the sweetest life in the world, is, to be crossing thyself, to please him; trampling on thy own will, to follow his

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## SERMON XXII.

### CONFIDENCE OF FAITH.

HABAKKUK iii. 17, 18.

Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat: the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

Most men's industries and employments are chiefly without them, but certainly our main and worthiest business lies within us; nor is ever a man fit for the varieties and vicissitudes of time and affairs without, till he have taken some pains to some good purpose within himself. A distempered, discomposed mind is as a limb out of joint, which is fit for no action, and moves both deformedly and painfully. That which we have to do, my brethren, for which these our meetings are commanded of God, and should be attended by us, and which we should follow out when we are gone hence, is this, the reducing of our souls to God. Their disunion from him is their disjointing, and they are never right till they refix on him; and being there, they are so right, that nothing can come wrong to them. As they are not readily ensnared with ease and plenty, so, neither are they lightly astonished with want and trouble, but, in the ebb of all other comforts, they can hold the prophet's purpose, to *joy in the Lord, and rejoice in the God of their salvation.*

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This, we may hear and speak of, but truly, few attain it. I fear, many of us are not so much as seeking after it and aspiring to it. A soul really conversant with God, is taken up with him, all its affections work and move toward him, as the prophet's here; his *fear*, his *joy*, his *trust*, ver. 16–19. This is a prayer, as it is entitled, but it is both a prophetical and an unusual one; a *prophecy* and a *song* (as the word added imports) *of Habakkuk the prophet on Neginoth.* The strain of it is high, and full of sudden raptures and changes, as that word signifies; as here, having expressed much fear in the foregoing words, a shivering, trembling horror, he yet adds such a height of an invincible kind of joy—like the needle of the compass, fixedly looking toward him, yet, not without a trembling motion. Thus, we have the temper of the psalmist, Psalm ii. 11: *Rejoice with trembling.* Which suits well to so sublime an object; joying in God, because he is *good*, yet with joy still mixed with holy awe, because he is *great.* And this especially in a time of great judgments, or in the lively apprehensions or representations of them, whether before or after their inflicting; whether they be on the people of God for their iniquities, or on the enemies of God for their oppressions and cruelties to his people while he made them instruments for their correction. In both, God is formidable, and *greatly to be feared*, even by those that are nearest to him. This we find in the prophets when seeing judgments afar off, long before their day, which they had commission to denounce. So, this prophet here not only discovers great awe and fear at what he saw and foretold concerning God's own people, the Jews, but at the after-reckoning with the Chaldeans, his and their enemies. When God comes to do judgment on the wicked, this will make them who stand by and suffer not with them, yet to tremble; yea, such as are advantaged by it, as usually the people of God are, their enemies' ruin proving their deliverance. The majesty and greatness of God, and the terribleness of his march toward them and seizing on them, as it is here highly set forth, this works an awful fear in the hearts of his own children. They can not see their Father angry but it makes them quake, though it be not against them, but on their behalf. And this were our right temper, when we see or hear of the hand of God against wicked men, who run their own courses against all warning;—not to entertain these things with carnal rejoicings and lightness of mind, or with boasting insults; to applaud indeed the righteousness of God, and to give him his glory, but withal, to fear before him, though they were strangers and no way a part of ourselves, and to have an humble sense of the Lord's dealing in it; so, Psalm lii. 6; and to learn to reverence God; *in all our ways to acknowledge him;* to be sure to take him along with us, and to undertake nothing without him.

And this fear of judgments falling upon others, is the way not to feel them on ourselves. When God sees that the sound of the rod on others' backs will humble a soul or a people, he will spare the stroke of it. They who have most of this holy fear of God's anger, fall least under the dint of it. *Blessed is he that feareth always; but he that hardens his heart, shall fall into mischief.* Prov. xxviii. 14. He that fears it not, shall fall into it; he that fears and trembles at it, shall escape. So the prophet here trusts for himself: ver. 16: *I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble*, and upon this confidence, he rises to this high resolution, *Yet I will rejoice in the Lord.*

The words, to make no other division of them, are a conjuncture of a *sad supposition*, and a *cheerful position*, or *purpose*.

*Although the fig-tree shall not blossom.*] This is a thing that may come, and, possibly, which the prophet did foresee would come, among other judgments; and it is of all other outward scourges the sorest, most smarting, and most sweeping; cuts off most people, and can least be suffered and shifted. It lieth among the rest in the storehouse of Divine judgments. He who furnished the earth, and gave being by the word of his mouth to all these things, hath still the sole, absolute power of them: they obey his word of command, and, rightly looked upon, in our use of them, and the sweetness we find in them, lead us to him as the spring of being and goodness. He is invisible in his nature; in his works, most visible and legible. Not only the spacious heavens and the glorious lights in them, but the meanest things on earth, every plant and flower in their being and growing, yea, every pile of grass, declare God to us.

And it is a supernatural light in natural things to see and taste him in them. It is more pleasant than their natural relish; it is the chief inner sweetness, the kernel and marrow of all; and they that take not the pains, and have not the skill to draw it forth, lose the far better half of their enjoyments, even of the things of this earth. To think, how wise he is who devised such a frame, how powerful he who made all these things, how rich he must be who still continues to furnish the earth with these varieties of provisions, how sweet must he be, whence all these things draw their sweetness! But, alas! we are brutish, and in our use of these things, we differ little or nothing from the beast. We are called to a higher life, but we live it not. *Man is in honor, but he understands it not; he is as the beast that perishes.* Psalm xlix. 20.

Now, because we acknowledge God so little in the use of these things, therefore he is put to it (so to speak) to teach us our lesson in the want and deprivement of them, which our dulness is more sensible of. We know things a great deal better by wanting them, than by having them, and take more notice of that

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hand which hath power of them, when he withdraws, than when he bestows them.

Besides all other provocations, and particular abuses of these things by intemperance and luxury, were it no more than the very neglecting of God in his goodness, this calls for a famine, to diet us into wiser thoughts, and to remind us of our own and all other creatures' dependance on that God whom we so forget, as to serve our idols and lusts upon his bounty. This was the case of Judah and Israel. See Hos. ii. 8–13. But when more sparingly fed, and better taught, *in the wilderness*, those mercies were restored again, and then, all acknowledged the dowry of that blessed marriage with himself, which is so far beyond all account. Ver. 14–16.

How wretched ingratitude is it, not to regard and love him in the use of all his mercies! But it is horrid stupidity, not to consider and seek to him in their withdrawment, or in the threatening of it. Few have a right sense of his hand in anything. They grumble and cry out, but not to him. As in the case of oppression, it is said, Job xxxv. 9, 10, *By reason of the multitude of oppressions, they make the oppressed to cry; they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty, but none sayeth, Where is God my maker?*—so, of this very judgment of famine, the prophet speaks, Hos. vii. 14: *And they have not cried unto me with their hearts, when they howled upon their beds: they assembled themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me.* They did not humbly and repentingly seek to God by prayer, but a natural brutish sense of their wants pressed out complaints; they howled as a hungry dog would do for bread. This is all the most do, in years of dearth, or harvests threatening it. No beast in the mountain or wilderness is so untamed as the heart of man, which, when catched in God's judgments, lies and cries as a wild bull in a net. It is true, they are somewhat nearer sober thoughts in distress; and their grief though merely natural, yet is nearer spiritual grief, than their mirth and laughter; but it must have a touch of that Spirit above, to make it spiritual, to made it change to gold, to turn to godly sorrow. No scourge carries a power of changing the heart with it; that is a superadded work. Many people, and particular persons, have been beat as in a mortar with variety of afflictions, one coming thick upon another, and yet, are never the wiser, and yet, *have not returned unto me, saith the Lord.*

Therefore, if you be afflicted, join prayer with your correction, and beg by it, that God would join his Spirit with it. Seek this in earnest, else you shall be not a whit the better, but shall still endure the smart, and not reap the fruit thereof. Yea, I believe, some are the worse, even by falsely imagining they are better, partly presuming it must be so, and partly, may be, feeling some present motions and meltings in the time of afflictions, which evanish and presently cool when they are off the fire. Ay, but these two together make a happy man; *Blessed is he whom thou correctest, and teachest out of thy law.* Psalm xciv. 12.

*Although the fig-tree shall not blossom.*] This sometimes does, and at any time may, befall a land; but, however, it is very useful to put such cases. It is true, there is great odds between real and imagined distresses; yet, certainly, the frequent viewing of its picture, though it is only in the imagination, hath so much likeness as somewhat abates the strangeness and frightfulness of its true visage when it comes.

There is a foolish pre-apprehension of possible evils, which, whether they come or not, does no good, but makes evils to come perplexingly beforehand, and antedates their misery, and adds the pain of many others that will never come. These are the fumes of a dark, distempered humor, vain fears, which vex and trouble some minds at present, and do not waste anything of any grief to come after. But calmly and composedly to sit down and consider evil days coming, any kind of trials that probably, yea, or possibly, may arrive, so as to be ready to entertain them without astonishment: this is a wise and useful exercise of the mind, and takes off much of the weight of such things, breaks them in falling on us, that they come not so sad down, when they light first upon the apprehension. Thus, it is true, nothing comes unawares to a wise man. He hath supposed all, or as bad as anything that can come, hath acquainted his mind with the horridest shapes, and, therefore, when such things appear, will not so readily start at them.

This I would advise to be done, not only in things we can more easily suffer, but in those we think would prove hardest and most indigestible, to inure thy heart to them; not to be like some, who are so tender-fancied, that they dare not so much as think of some things, the death of a dear friend, or husband, or wife, or child. That is oftener to be viewed, rather than any other event. Bring thy mind to it, as a starting-horse to that whereat it does most startle—"What if I should be bereft of such a person, such a thing?" This would make it much more tolerable when thou art put to it. "What if the place where I live, were visited with all at once in some degree, pestilence, and sword, and famine? How should I look on them? Could my mind keep its own place and standing, fixed on God in such a case? What if I were turned out of my good furniture and warm house, and stripped not only of accessory, but necessary things" (as here he supposes not only the failing of delicacies, the fig-tree, wine, and olives, but of common necessary food, the fields not yielding meat, and the flocks cut off); thy little ones crying for bread, and thou hast none for them? You little know what the tenderest and delicatest among you may be put to. These times have given many real

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instances, within these kingdoms, of strange changes in the condition of all ranks of persons. Or think, if thou abhorrest that, "What if I were smitten with blotches or loathsome sores on my flesh, or if, by any accident, I should lose an arm, or an eye, or both eyes? What if extreme poverty, and sickness, and forsaking of friends come all at once? Could I welcome these, and make up all in God—find riches, and friends, and fulness in him?" Most men, if they would speak truly to such a case, must declare them insufferable: "I were undone if such a thing befell me, or such a comfort were taken from me." Most would cry out, as Micah did, Judges xviii. 24: *Ye have taken away my gods;* for so are these things our hearts cleave to and principally delight in. He that worships mammon, his purse is the sensiblest piece of him: he is broke, if fire, or ravage of war, throw him out of his nest, and empty it. He that makes his *belly his god* (such they are the apostle speaks of, Phil. iii. 19), how could he endure this case the prophet puts here, the failing of vines, of flocks and herds?

It were good to add to the supposition of want, somewhat of the reality of it; sometimes to abridge thyself of things thou desirest and lovest, to inure thy appetite to a refusal of what it calls for; to practise somewhat of poverty, to learn to need few things.

It is strange, men should be so foolish as to tie themselves to these things, which have neither satisfying content in them, nor certain abode. And *why shouldst thou set thine eyes on things which are not?* says Solomon, Proverbs xxiii. 5—a *nonens*, a fancy? How soon may you be parted! He who is the true God, God alone, how soon can he pull the false gods from you, or you from them!—as in that word, Job xxvii. 8: *What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?* Like that case in the parable, Luke xii. 19: *Soul, take thine ease.* A strange inference from full barns! That were sufficient provision for a horse, a fit happiness for it; but for a soul, though it were to stay, how gross and base a portion! But it can not stay neither: *This night thy soul shall be required of thee.*

The only firm position is that of the prophet, *Yet will I rejoice in the Lord.* And such times indeed are fit to give proof of this, to tell thee whether it be so indeed, where thy heart is built. While thy honor, and wealth, and friends, are about thee, it is hard to know whether these props bear thee up, or another, an Invisible supporter; but when these are plucked away, and thou art destitute round about, then it will appear if thy strength be in God, if these other things were but flourishes about thee, and thou laidst no weight on them at all. He that leans on these, must fall when these fall, and his *hope is cut off*, and his *trust as a spider's web. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand.* Job viii. 14, 15. They that clasp their hearts about their houses or estates, within a while they are either sadly pulled asunder, or swept away together.

But, oh! the blessed, the high condition of a soul set on God, untied, independent from all things beside him, its whole dependance and rest placed on him alone, sitting loose to all the world, and so not stirred with alterations! Yea, amid the turnings upside-down of human things, if the frame of the heaven and earth were falling to pieces,* the heart founded on him who made it, abides unmoved; *the everlasting arms are under* it, and bear it up.

Do ye believe, my brethren, that there is such a thing, that it is no fancy? Yea, all is but fancy beside it. Do you believe this? Why, then, is one day after another put off, and this not attained, nor the soul so much as entered or engaged to a serious endeavor after it, looking on all things else, compared to this noble design, as vanity? How often, and how easily are their joys damped, who rejoice in other things, and their hopes broken! What they expected most, soon proves a lie, as the word spoken of the *olive* here signifies; as if the *labor* of it should *lie* (*spem mentita seges*)—a fair vintage or harvest promised, and either withered with drought, or drowned with rain; indeed, it lies at the best! But the soul that places its joy on God, is still fresh and green when all are withered about it. Jer. xvii. 8: *Acquaint thyself with him* betimes in ease. It is a sad case, to be making acquaintance with him, when thou shouldst most make use of his friendship, and find comfort in his love.

Now this joy in God can not remain in an impure, unholy soul, no more than heaven and hell can mix together. An impure, unholy soul, I call not that which is stained with sin, for no other are under the sun; all must then quit all pretensions to that estate; but such a one as willingly entertains any sinful lust or way of wickedness. That delight and this are directly opposite. And certainly the more the soul is refined from all delights of sin, yea, even from sinless delights of sense and of this present world, it hath the more capacity, the fitter and the larger room, for this pure, heavenly delight.

No language can make a natural man understand what this thing is, *to rejoice in God.* Oh! it is a mystery. Most men mind poor childish things, laughing and crying in a breath, at trifles; easily puffed up, and as easily cast down. But even the children of God are too little acquainted with this their portion. Which of you find this power in the remembrance of God, that it doth overflow and drown all other things, both your worldly joys and worldly sorrows, that you find them not? And thus it would be, if we knew him. Is he, then, our Father, and yet we know him not?

Although all should fail, yet, rejoice in him

* Si fractus illibatur orbis.

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who fails not, who alters not. He is still the same in himself, and to the sense of the soul that is knit to him, is then sweetest when the world is bitterest. When other comforts are withdrawn, the loss of them brings this great gain, so much the more of God and his love imparted, to make all up. They that ever found this, could almost wish for things that others are afraid of. If we knew how to improve them, his sharpest visits would be his sweetest; thou wouldst be glad to catch a kiss of his hand while he is beating thee, or pulling away something from thee that thou lovest, and bless him while he is doing so.

*Rejoice in God, although the fig-tree blossom not*, &c. Yea, rejoice in these hardest things, as his doing. A heart rejoicing in him, delights in all his will, and is surely provided for the most firm joy in all estates; for if nothing can come to pass beside, or against his will, then can not that soul be vexed with delights in him, and hath no will but his, but follows him in all times, in all estates, not only when he shines bright on them, but when they are clouded. That flower which follows the sun, doth so even in cloudy days: when it doth not shine forth, yet it follows the hidden course and motion of it. So, the soul that moves after God, keeps that course when he hides his face; is content, yea, is glad at his will in all estates, or conditions, or events. And though not only all be withered and blasted without, but the face of the soul little better within to sense, no flourishing of graces for the present, yet it rejoices in him, and in that everlasting covenant that still holds, *ordered in all things and sure*, as the sweet singer of Israel sweetly expresses it, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5: *For this*, says he, *is all my salvation and all my desire*, ALTHOUGH *he make it not to grow*. That is a strange *although*, and yet is he satisfied even in that.

This joy in God, as *my God, the God of my salvation*, ought to exercise the soul in the darkest and worst times; and it ought to stick to it, not to let go this confidence, still expecting salvation from him, and resting on him for it, though not having those senses and assurances that thou desirest. This, weak believers are easily beaten from, by temptation. But we are to stand to our right in him, even when we see it not. And when it is said to thee, as in Psalm iii., that *there is no help for thee in God*, tell all that say so, they lie: *He is my God, my glory, and the lifter-up of my head;* as there he speaks.

Rejoice in him still as *thy* God; and however, rejoice in him as GOD. *I will rejoice in Jehovah*, glad that he is God, that his enemies can not unsettle nor reach his throne, that he rules, and is glorious in all things, that he is self-blessed, and needs nothing. This is the purest and highest kind of rejoicing in him, and is certainly most distant and most free from alteration, and hath, indeed, most of heaven in it.

## SERMON XXIII.

### SPIRITUAL PRIVILEGES.

### 1 Cor. i. 30.

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

THE great design of the gospel is, to bring men to Jesus Christ; and, next to that, to instruct those who are brought to him, in the clearest knowledge, and to keep them in the fresh remembrance of the privileges and happiness they have in him. This the apostles, writing to new converts, much insist upon, and Paul most abundantly: but nowhere more excellently and fully than in these words.

As that is a great and much commended oracle, γνῶθι σεαύτον, *Know thyself*, so, also, there can be nothing more comfortable and profitable for a Christian than this point, to understand his new being, to know himself as out of himself in Christ, to study what he is there. Oh! what joy, what humility, what holiness would it work, were we well seen and much conversant in this subject, viewing ourselves in this light, as here the apostle represents a believer to himself, *Of him are ye in Christ Jesus*, &c.

If we look back a little, we see his aim is, to vindicate the doctrine of Christ from contempt in that chief point which is the believer's greatest comfort and glory, yet lies openest to the world's misprison, the doctrine of the cross, *Christ crucified*. Him we preach, says he, let men take it as they please: be he *a stumbling-block to the Jews*, and *foolishness to the Gentiles*, yet, *to them that believe* among both, he is *the power of God, and the wisdom of God*.

As, in the person of Christ, glory was wrapped up in meanness, so it was in his sufferings and death. And in the doctrine of it, and in the way of preaching of it, they are not dressed with *human wisdom*, or *excellency of speech:* this would be as incongruous as that rich, gaudy attire they cover the image of the Virgin with, and her Child lying in a stable. And that all might be suitable, so is it in the persons of those that believe on him. *Brethren, you see your calling, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.* And God's purpose in this, is, *that no flesh should glory before him.*

This is the grand disease of flesh, to swell in conceit of any little advantages, real or imagined, forgetting itself and him from whom it receives all, receives its very self, the being it hath, and all superadded good. Now, God is pleased, in justice on some, and in great mercy to others, so to order most things ir the world, as to allay this tumor; often bringing down high things, and raising the low, and so attempering and levelling disparities

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as to take men off from self-glorying. Proud undertakings, we see, are commonly most disgracefully broken. Nor is there any surer passage of the speedy ruin of any affairs or persons, than presumptuous boasting. This is God's work among men, as even natural men have observed, to abase high things, to exalt low things. He goes from one thing to another, pulling down the crest and blasting the glory of all human excellency, breaking the likeliest projects, and effecting what is least to be expected, *withdrawing man from his purpose, to hide pride from his eyes*, as Elihu speaks, Job xxxiii. 17. To this purpose, see Job x. 11, 12; 1 Sam. ii. 4, 5; and the Virgin in her song, Luke i. 51. Whatsoever men bear themselves big upon, and begin to glory in, they call the hand of God to crush it, raising an idol of jealousy in his sight. All high things have their day: *The day of the Lord shall be on all the cedars of Lebanon, and he alone exalted.* Isa. ii. 13, 17. If ever this was the case in any time, we may see it is legible in ours, in great letters. This is the very result of his ways, staining the pride of all glory, defeating witty counsels, making counsellors mad, throwing down all plumes and trampling them in the mire, that no party or persons in the kingdom can set out for any triumph of courage, or wit, or any other excellency, but somewhat shall be clearly seen to meet and dash it in pieces, *that no flesh may glory before him.* And this, to souls that love God, is the main happiness of the times, and that wherein they will chiefly rejoice.

The particular here spoken of, is eminently suited to this end, the choice and calling of persons to the dignity of Christians: *Not many wise, not many mighty, or noble*, but *the mean things, the foolish things*, and the most insignificant, *things that are not, non-entia*, very nothings, to annul things that seem most to be something. Thus it was in the first times; and though afterward, by means of these meaner persons, greater were caught and drawn into Christ, philosophers and kings, yet still it remains true in all times, that predominantly the choice is of the meaner sort; God testifying how little he esteems those things which men account great. Those endowments of wit and eloquence which men admire in some, alas! how poor are they to him! he respecteth not any who are wise in heart: they are nothing, and less than nothing in his eyes. He is the author of all these. *Will he esteem thy riches? No, not gold, nor all the forces of strength.* Job xxxvi. 19. Even wise men admire how little it is that men know, how small a matter lies under the sound of those popular wonders, a learned man, a great scholar, a great statesman: how much more doth the all-wise God meanly account of these! He often discovers, even to the world, their meanness; he befools them. So valor, or birth, or worldly greatness, these he gives, and gives as things he makes no great reckoning of, to such as shall never see his face; and calls to the inheritance of glory poor despised creatures who are looked on as the offscourings and refuse of the world: *these are raised from the dunghill*, and *set with princes*, made *the sons and daughters of God*, entitled each of them to *a crown that fades not.* Oh the wonder!

Now, they are not puffed up with this, but the more assurance they have, and the clearer their view is of the state they are called to, the more humble they are; still laying these together, What was I in myself? and what am I in Christ? And, in comparing these, they are swallowed up with amazement at that love which made this change; and for this very end doth the apostle express thus their estate, *Ye are of him in Christ Jesus.*

This is a new being, a creation; for, in relation to this being, we are nothing in our state of nature; and then, considering that in relation to others, the meanest are often chosen and made partakers of this being, such as have nothing naturally great of nobility, or morality, or high intellectuals; the most nothings are often chosen and made partakers of this being, to illustrate the power of Him who makes them exist. In kings somewhat may be observed of this in their choice of favorites, and raising men who are not of highest deserving, as affecting to show their freedom in choice, and their power in making out of nothing, and so they love to have them called their creatures. But these are but shadows: both are poor creatures, both are easily thrown down. But God doth indeed show, in his choice, his freedom and power in his new creature: he draws them out of the lowest bottom of nothing, and raises them to the most excellent kind of being that creatures are capable of, to be *the sons of God, and so heirs, joint heirs with Christ Jesus.* Rom. viii. 17.

*Ye are of him in Christ Jesus.*] This must be taken in an eminent sense. All the creatures are *of God*; but man, even in his first creation, for the dignity of his being, and the slow way of forming him, was accounted to be *of God*, in a peculiar manner: formed to his own likeness, and therefore called *the Son of God*, called *his offspring.* Acts xvii. 28. But in this new being, much more are we so: we are *of him* as his children, partakers of the divine nature, and that so fastened that it abideth. And the medium of this excellent and permanent being is primarily to be considered; for in him it becomes so. It is both high and firm, being in the essential Son, as the foundation of it: therefore here expressed, as bearing the whole weight of this happy fabric.

*Of him ye are in Christ Jesus.* The life which believers derive from God is through *him.* He is that eternal Word, by which all things were made in their first creation, and do still subsist. Heb. i.; John i. And he is made the basis of the second creation, in a

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wonderful way, becoming himself a creature; and so, the root of the new progeny is from heaven, *the sons of God:* so it follows in both these cited scriptures. John i. 12–14. *The word was made flesh*, and so, they that *receive him* are made *the sons of God*. And so, Heb. ii. 10, 11, amply and excellently is that mystery unfolded. The first frame of man, at least the excellency and beauty of it, was broken by his fall; therefore a new model is framed of a selected number, to be a new world, more firm than the former, united unto God so close, as never to be severed again. Man, though he was made holy and God-like, continued not in that honor. Now God himself becomes a man, to make all sure: that is the foundation of an indissoluble union. Man is knit to God in the person of Christ so close, that there is no possibility of dividing them any more; and this union of our nature in his person is made the ground of the union of our persons with God. We find our own flesh catch hold in Christ of a man, and in that man may find God, and are made one with him by faith in Christ. And this all the powers of hell can not dissolve. Our life none can cut off from his, more than a man can cut a beam from off the sun. We are and subsist of God in Christ. This is an unknown mystery, but, were it known, it would prove a depth of rich, inexhaustible consolation. The world doth not know what Christians are. This is no wonder; for truly they know not themselves, or but very little. How would it elevate their spirits, but not in pride! Oh! nothing is more humbling than this, as the apostle here implies. But it would raise them above the world, and suit their desires and their actions to their condition, having all under foot that the world accounts great, walking as heirs of heaven, led and moved by the spirit of Christ in them; thinking, when solicited to any base way, how doth this become the sons of God? Shall one who lives in Christ, degrade him so much, as to borrow comfort or pleasure from any sin, for the killing and destruction whereof he laid down his precious life?

Oh, my brethren, that this divine ambition were kindled in your breasts, to partake of this high and happy being, and leave all your pursuits to follow this, restless till you be in Christ! For solid, abiding rest, sure I am, out of him there is none. And then, being in him, remember where you are, and what you are. *Walk in Christ*, and live like him, as one with him indeed: let his thoughts and desires be yours. What was his work, yea, what his refreshment, his meat and drink? To do his Father's will. Oh! when shall we find ourselves so minded, as the Apostle's word is, *the same mind in us that was in Christ?*

*Who of God is made unto us wisdom.*] *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning.* It was not an accidental after-device in God (for in him there can be no such thing), but was his great forethought project, out of the ruins of man's first estate, to raise a fairer and firmer fabric, new from the very foundation. And in the new foundation lies the model, and excellency, and stability of the whole structure. This is the choicest of all his works, wherein he chiefly glories; his masterpiece, which great angels admire; and this is it, *who of God is made unto us wisdom.* And this is one letter of his name. He is called *Wonderful*, who is here spoken of: so all is wonderful in this work: *wonderful*, first, that he should be *made* anything, the Maker of all things himself made something which before he was not; then *made to us*—that he should be made anything to *our* interest and advantage, who are a company of traitors; and *made unto us of God*, the God against whom we rebelled and continued naturally enemies! The purpose was bred in the Father's own breast, to give out his Son, thence to recover us and bring us back. Oh, astonishing depth of love! Then, *made unto us* what? Rather, what not? We are made up in him for ever rich and happy; he being made all unto us, all we need, or can desire, *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.* Without him, we are undone, forlorn caitiffs, masses of misery, as you say, having nothing either *in us or on us*, nothing but poverty and wretchedness, blindness and nakedness, altogether ignorant of the way to happiness, yea, ignorant of our very misery, a nest of fools, natural fools, children of folly (as they who are renewed by, and provided with, this wisdom, are called *children of wisdom*), guilty, filthy, condemned slaves.

This is the goodly posture we are in, out of Christ; yet, who is sensible of it? How few can be brought to serious thoughts about it! Nay, are not the most in the midst of this misery, yet full of high conceits of their worth, wit, freedom, &c.? As frantic bedlamites, lying naked and filthy in their chains, yet dream they are great and wise persons, commanding and ordering all about them; fancying, possibly, that they are kings, a stick in their hands a sceptre, and their iron chains of gold. This is a pleasing madness for the time; yet, who does not pity it that looks on?

Methinks I see one of this sort, when I see one evidently destitute of Christ, bearing himself big upon the fancy of his parts, and birth, and riches, or stoutness; see such, upon any cross word, swelling against others, threatening high, and protesting they will be slaves to none; not knowing that, even while they speak thus, they are wretched caitiffs, under the hardest and basest kind of slavery. Inquire, my brethren, if ever you had a right and clear view of your natural misery; otherwise you are, it is likely, still in it, and though you profess to believe in Christ, are not yet gone out of yourselve to him, and not knowing your great need of him, do certainly



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make little esteem and little use of him. *You are full, and reign without him;* all is well and in quiet; but it is owing to the *strong man's* yet possessing the house, and keeping you captives as quiet as he can, that you look not out, or cry for a deliverer. He is afraid of him, to be dispossessed and turned out by Him who is stronger, the mighty redeemer that came out of Zion. Oh, that many among you were crying to him, and waiting for him, to come unto you for your rescue!

*Made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.*] To supply and help all, he is our magazine whither to have recourse to: for this end, he is replenished with *all the fulness of God*, the very *fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him, the Spirit being not given to him by measure.* He is fit to be *made our wisdom*, who is *the wisdom of the Father;* as here in this place, the apostle lately called him, *the wisdom of God. In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, Col. ii. 3. They that find him, and come unto him, find it so: but the most look but on the surface; they hear his name, and know not what is under it.

*Made unto us righteousness.* By fulfilling the whole law, and *all righteousness*, Matt. iii. 15, and yet, suffering the rigor of it, as if he had transgressed it. No guile, no spot was found on him: he was *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners*, and yet, the greatest sinner by imputation: *The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all*, Isa. liii. 6. And so, Psalm xl. 12, which is prophesied of him: *Mine iniquities have taken hold of me.* He owns them as *his*, though not his. He endured all that justice could require, entered and paid the debt, and is acquitted and set free again, and *exalted at the right hand of God.* So it is evident that he is *righteous*, even in that representative and sponsional person he put on.

*Sanctification.* Christ is a living spring of that; *anointed above his fellows.* In him is no mixture of any iniquity. The Holy Ghost descended on the apostles in the shape of fire; there was somewhat to be purged in them: they were to be quickened and enabled by it for their calling. But on him it descended *as a dove:* there was no need of cleansing or purging out anything. That was a symbol of the spotless purity of his nature, and of the fulness of the Spirit dwelling in him.

*And redemption.* Christ is mighty to save, and having a right to save; a *kinsman;* a *brother.* And as he hath bought freedom for sinners, so, he will put them in possession of it, will effect and complete it. All that are in him, are really delivered from the power of sin and death, and shall, ere long, be perfectly and fully so: they shall be lifted up above them, no longer to be molested with any remainders of either, or with the fear of them, or so much as any grief for them. And that day is called *the day of redemption*, to which we are beforehand made sure and *sealed by the Spirit.* Ephes. iv. 30.

We can not then doubt of his fitness and fulness to be these, and these *for us;* but withal, we must know that he is designed so to be *made unto us*, and that he came, and did, and suffered all for this purpose, and having done, returned, and now lives, to be these to us. It is his place and office, and so his delight; he loves to be put upon the performance of this, to be their *wisdom and righteousness. Made of God to us.* It is agreed between the Father and him, that he should be so. He is *the wisdom of God*, and *made of God our wisdom.* Wonderful! that the same which is *his own wisdom*, and no less, he would *make ours.* And now, under a sense of all our ignorances and follies, it becomes us to go to him, to apply ourselves to him, and apply him to us. He is called our *Head*, and called so most fitly, for it is the place of all our wisdom; that lies in our head. And so, as to all the rest, *righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.* If he be *righteousness* in himself, and holy, and victor over his enemies, and set free from wrath and death, then are *we* so too, in him; for he is *ours*, and so *ours*, that we become what he is, are inrighted to all he hath, and endowed with all his goods; though poor and base in ourselves, yet married to him; that is the title. We are made rich, and noble, and free, we are righteous and holy, because *he* is. *Uxor fulget radiis mariti. The wife shines with the rays of her husband.* All debts and pleas are taken off, he stands between us and all hazard, and in him we stand acquitted and justified before God.

That which makes up the match, and ties the knot of this union, is *faith. He is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness*, &c. He is tendered and held out as all these, in the promise of the gospel; not only declared to be really furnished and fit so to be, but offered to be so, and we warranted, yea, invited and entreated, to receive him as such. But he is effectually *made* to be this *to us, to me*, by believing, the promise being brought home and applied of God, and faith wrought in the heart to entertain and unite to him. Ἡ πίστις ἑνοποιεῖ: Faith closes the bargain, and makes him *ours.* Now, in that, he is *made unto us*, not *of ourselves*, but *God*, for that is his gift and work: we can not believe, any more than we can fulfil the whole law. And though men think it a common and easy thing, to accept of so sweet an offer at so cheap a rate, nothing being required but to receive him, yet, this is a thing that naturally all refuse. *No man cometh*, says he, *except the Father draw him.* John vi. 44. Though men be beseeched to come, yet, the most *will not come unto him, that they may have life. To as many as received him, he gave the privilege to become the sons of God*, John i. 12; and yet, for all that, many did not receive him; yea, as there it is express-

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ed, *He came to his own, but his own received him not.* They who were nearest to him in natural relation and interest, yet refused him, for the most part, and attained not this blessed spiritual interest in him unto life.

It should be considered, my brethren, Christ is daily held out, and none are excluded or excepted, all are invited, be they what they will, who have need of him and use for him; and yet, who is persuaded? Oh, *who hath believed our report?* One hath his *farm*, another his *oxen*, each some engagement or another. Men are not at leisure for Christ. Why? You think, may be, you have received him. If it be so, you are happy. Be not deluded. Have you received him? Do you find him then living and ruling within you? Are your eyes upon him? Do you wait on him, early and late, to see what his will is? Is your soul glad in him? Can you, in distress, sickness, or poverty, clasp to him, and find him sweet, and allay all with this thought, However things go with me, yet, Christ is in me? Doth your heart cleave to him? Certainly, if he be in you, it will be thus; or, at least, your most earnest desire will be, that it may be thus.

Men will not believe how hard a matter it is, to believe the fulness and sufficiency of Jesus Christ, till they be put to it in earnest to make use of him, and then they find it; when sin and death are set before their view, and discovered in their native colors unto the soul, when a man is driven to that, *What shall I do to be saved?* then, then is the time to know what notion he hath of Christ. And as the difficulty lies in this, in the first awakening of the conscience from sin, so, in after-times of temptation and apprehension of wrath, when, upon some new-added guiltiness, or a new sight of the old, in a frightful manner, *sin revives and the soul dies*, it is struck dead with the terrors of the law—then to keep thy hold, and find another life in Christ, the law and justice satisfied, and so the conscience quieted in him: this is indeed to believe.

It is a thing of huge difficulty, to bring men to a sense of their natural misery, to see that they have need of a Savior, and to look out for one: but then, being brought to that, it is no less, if not more difficult, to persuade them that Christ is he; that, as they have need of him, so they need no more, he being able and sufficient for them. All the waverings and fears of misbelieving minds, do spring from dark and narrow apprehensions of Jesus Christ. All the doubt is, not of their interest, as they imagine: they who say so, and think it so, do not perceive the bottom and root of their own malady. They say, they do no whit doubt but that he is able enough, and his righteousness large enough, but that all the doubt is, *if he belong to me.* Now, I say, this doubt arises from a defect and doubt of the former, wherein you suspect it not. Why doubtest thou that he belongs to thee? Dost thou flee to him, as lost and undone in thyself? Dost thou renounce all that can be called thine, and seek thy life in him? Then he is thine. *He came to seek and to save that which was lost.* Oh, but I find so much, not only former, but still daily renewed and increasing guiltiness. Why, is he a sufficient Savior, or is he not? If thou dost say, he is not, then it is manifest that here lies the defect and mistake. If thou sayest, he is, then hast thou answered all thy objections of that kind: much guiltiness, much or little, old or new, neither helps nor hinders, as to thy interest in him and salvation by him. And for dispelling of these mists, nothing can be more effectual than the letting in of those gospel beams, the clear expressions of his riches and fulness in the Scriptures, and eminently this, *Made of God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.*

*Wisdom.* Both *objectively* and *effectively. Objectively*, I mean, our wisdom, as all our wisdom lies in the right knowledge and apprehension of him. And this suits to the apostle's present discourse. The *Jews* would have *a sign*, and the *Gentiles, wisdom;* but *we*, says he, *preach Christ.* So, ch. ii. 2: *I determined to know nothing, save Christ crucified.* He was learnedly bred, and knew many things beside, much of nature, and much of the law; but all this was, to him, obsolete, useless stuff: it was as if he never had heard of or known anything else but Jesus Christ. We may know other things, but this, and this alone, is our wisdom, *to know him, and him crucified.* Particularly, we may have knowledge of the law, and by it the knowledge of sin; but in relation to our standing before God, and so, our happiness, which is the greatest point of wisdom, Jesus Christ is alone, and is all. And the more firmly a soul eyes Christ, and loses all other knowledge and itself in contemplating him, the more truly wise and heavenly it is.

And *effectively* he is our wisdom. All our right knowledge of him and belief in him, flow from himself, are derived from him, and sent into our souls. His spirit is conveyed into ours; a beam of himself, as of the sun. The Sun of righteousness is not seen but by his own light; so that every soul that is made wise unto salvation, that is brought to apprehend Christ, to cleave to him, and repose on him, it is by an emission of Divine light from himself, that shows him, and leads unto him. And so we know God in him. There is no right knowledge of the Father but in the Son. God dwelling in the *man, Christ*, will be found or known nowhere else; and they that consider and worship God out of Christ, do not know or worship the true God; but a false notion and fancy of their own.

The *Shechinah*, the *habitation of the Majesty*, is Jesus Christ; there he dwells as between the cherubims over the mercy-seat.

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To apprehend God so as to love him, and trust in him all our life, to hope to find favor and bliss with him, this is the only wise knowledge of him. Now, this alone is in Christ, and from him. He contains this representation of God, and gives his own light to see it. So that a Christian's desire should be, in relation to Jesus Christ, that of David in reference to the temple, as a figure of him, *One thing have I desired of him, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord;* that I may get in to Christ, to know God there, *to behold the beauty of the Lord.* There we see beauty indeed, the Father's glory, and so, as *our Father* reconciled to us, we see him *merciful and gracious.* And as we should desire *to behold,* so, still, *to inquire in his temple,* to advance in the knowledge of God, studying him in Christ: we are to admire what we see, and to seek still to see more. And know, that this knowledge of God, as we have it *in Christ,* so it is *from him.* He reveals the Father: he came from his bosom for that purpose. We can not believe on him, can not come near God through him, but as he lets forth of his light, to conduct and lead us in, yea, powerfully to draw in, for his light does so. Now, knowing and apprehending him by his own light, his Spirit, the apostle clears it, that this is our *wisdom,* by those rich titles added, according to which we find him to us, when we receive from him that wisdom by which we apprehend him aright and lay hold on him, then *made unto us righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.*

*Righteousness.* This doubtless is meant of the righteousness by which we are justified before God. And he is *made this to us:* applied by faith, *his* righteousness becomes *ours.* That exchange made, our sins are laid over upon him, and his obedience put upon us. This is the great glad tidings, that we are made righteous by Christ. It is not a righteousness wrought by us, but given to us, and put upon us. This carnal reason can not comprehend, and being proud, therefore rejects and argues against it; says, *How can this thing be?* But faith closes with it, and rejoices in it. Without either doing or suffering, the sinner is acquitted and justified, and stands as guiltless of breach, yea, as having fulfilled the whole law. And happy they who thus fasten upon this righteousness! They may lift up their faces with gladness and boldness before God; whereas the most industrious, self-saving justiciary, though in other men's eyes and his own, possibly, for the present, he makes a glittering show, yet, when he shall come to be examined of God, and tried according to the law, he shall be covered with shame, and confounded in his folly and guiltiness. But faith triumphs over self-unworthiness, and sin, and death, and the law, shrouding the soul under the mantle of Jesus Christ; and there it is safe. All accusations fall off, having nowhere to fasten, unless some blemish could be found in that righteousness in which faith hath wrapt itself. This is the very spring of solid peace, and fills the soul with peace and joy. But still men would have something within themselves to make out the matter, as if this robe needed any such piecing; and not finding what they desire, thence disquiet and unsettlement of mind arise.

True it is, that this faith purifies the heart, and works holiness, and all graces flow from it; but in this work of justifying the sinner, it is alone, and can not admit of any mixture. As Luther's resemblance is, "Faith is as the bride with Christ in the bed-chamber alone; but when she cometh forth, hath the attendance and train of other graces with her." This well understood, the soul that believes on Jesus Christ, will not let go for all deficiency in itself; and yet, so resting on him, will not be slothful nor regardless of any duty of holiness. Yea, this is the way to abound in all the fruits of the Spirit, first to have that *wisdom* from him, rightly to apprehend and apply him as our *righteousness,* and then shall we find all furniture of grace in him; he will likewise be *sanctification.* Say not, Unless I find some measure of *sanctification,* what right have I to apply him as my *righteousness?* This inverts the order, and disappoints thee of both. Thou must first, without finding, yea, or seeking anything in thyself but misery and guiltiness, lay hold on him as thy *righteousness;* or else thou shalt never find *sanctification* by any other endeavor or pursuit.

He it is that is *made sanctification to us,* and out of him we seek it in vain. Now, first he must be *thy righteousness,* before thou find him *thy sanctification.* Simply as a guilty sinner, thou must flee to him for shelter; and then, being come in, thou shalt be furnished out of his fulness, with *grace for grace.* As a poor man pursued by the justiciary, fleeing to a strong castle for safety, and being in it, finds it a rich palace, and all his wants supplied there.

This misunderstanding of that method, is the cause of that darkness and discomfort, and withal of that deadness and defect of graces, that many persons go drooping under, who will not take this way, the only straight and sure way of life and comfort. Now,

*Sanctification* he is to us, not only as a perfect pattern, but as a powerful principle. It is really the spirit of Christ in a believer, that crucifies the world, and purges out sin, and forms the soul to his likeness. It is impossible to be holy, not being in him; and being truly in him, it is as impossible not to be holy. Our pothering and turmoiling without him makes us lose our labor; and in this point, indeed, *little wit makes much labor.*

*Redemption.* Sin is often prevailing even in believers, and therewithal discomforts and doubts arising, as it can not otherwise choose. Oh, how do they groan and sigh as captives

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still to the law of sin and death! Well, there is in our Lord Jesus help for that too. He is *redemption;* that is, the complement and fulness of deliverance. The price he paid once for all: now he goes on to work that deliverance by conquest, which he bought by ransom. It is going on even when we feel it not, and within a little while it shall be perfected, and we shall see all the host of our enemies who pursued us, as Israel saw the Egyptians lie dead upon the shore. Courage! that day is coming.

And all this is, *That he that glories, may glory in the Lord.* Is it reasonable? No self-glorying: the more faith, the less will there be still of that. A believer is nothing in himself: all is Christ's, Christ is his all. That treasurer who, being called to an account, because that out of nothing he had enriched himself suddenly, many thought he would have been puzzled with it; but he, without being much moved, next morning came before the king in an old suit that he wore before he got that office, and said, "Sir, this suit on my back is mine, but all the rest is thine." So, our old suit is ours, all the rest Christ's, and he allows it well. And in the full and pure glory that ascends to God in this work, are we to rejoice more than in the work itself as our salvation. There is an humble kind of boasting that becomes a Christian. *My soul shall glory* (or *make her boast*) *in God*, says David, *all the day long.* "What was I before I met with Christ," thinks a believer, "and now what am I?" And, upon that thought, he wonders and loves. But most of the wonder is yet to come; for he conceives but little *what we shall be.*

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## SERMON XXIV.

### THE FOLLY OF MAN, AND THE TEACHING OF GOD.

JEREMIAH x. 23, 24.

O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps.
O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.

IT can not be expressed what an advantage a heart acquainted with God hath, in all the revolutions and changes of the world, when it turns unto him, and gives vent to its griefs and desires into his bosom, and so finds ease. This the prophet does here: after the denouncing of a heavy judgment, he turns toward him from whom he brought that message, to entreat for them to whom he brought it. After a very sad close of his sermon, he adds this short but very sweet prayer; presents himself, and speaks in that style, as representing the whole people: *Correct me, O Lord;* he makes their calamity, as it were, all his own; bears their person, and presents his petition for them in his own name. The prophets, though they could not but applaud and approve the justice of God who sent them, in the harshest news they brought, yet, withal, could not be insensible to the miseries of his people; and so we find them mixing pathetical complaints and prayers for them, with the predictions of judgments against them.

*Observe.* And thus are all his faithful ministers affected toward his church. The Lord himself is pleased to express a kind of regret, sometimes, in the punishing of them; as the tender-hearted father feels the lashes he lays on, though highly deserved by the stubbornness of his children. *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I make thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.* Hosea xi. 8. So it well becomes his servants to be thus affected when they deliver sad news to his people, to return praying for them; thus going as angels between heaven and earth, beseeching the people to return unto God, and beseeching God to return to his people, and spare them.

The prophet, in this prayer, first premises a *position* suiting his purpose, and then, upon that, presents his *supplication.* The *position* he lays, to make a double benefit of it in order to his *petition.* It is both a sure ground for himself to stand on, and a fit argument to move God by. Thus it is, and thus he intends and uses it, at once to support his own faith, and to work on the goodness of God by it. Beside the fitness of the truth itself for both these ends, we find some print of both in the very way of expressing it, *O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself,* so expressing both his own persuasion of the truth of it, *I know,* and representing it to God as a fit truth to urge his suit by, *O Lord, I know.*

*Observe.* A great part of the strength and art of prayer, lies in this: first, to have the mind furnished with fit conceptions of God, and established in the firm persuasions of them; in that is much of the strength of prayer: then, fitly to call up and use these conceptions and persuasions for our own supporting and prevailing with God; in that lies the art of it.

We possibly think that we do sufficiently believe both the goodness and power of God, especially his power, none suspecting himself of the least doubt of it; yet our perplexing doubts and fears, our feeble staggerings in faith and prayer, upon particular pressing difficulties, discover evidently a defect here, though still we will not own it. And alas! how little faculty have we in the most needful times, to rest on his strength, and to stir up ourselves to stir him up by prayer, to do for us, holding firm to that great point of his absolute sovereignty and power over all things, and holding it up to him, entreating

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him by it to appear and work for us. Lord, it is in thy hand; that I know, and that is enough to me: thy good will I dare trust. (For there is implied a secret confidence of that.) This contents me, that thou hast full power of the business. That is the thing which here the prophet fixes on. *O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself. q. d.* As there is in us no power to turn off the judgment determined, all our wit and strength can do nothing to that, so we are sure there is no power in our enemies to do anything either beyond or beside thy appointment, in the execution of it. And upon this, Lord, we come to supplicate thee for mitigation. With men it often falls out, either in just punishments, or unjust oppressions, that the ministers and under-officers do exceed their commission, and overdo their business; yea, sometimes add little less of their own, than all that comes to which is appointed to them. But with thee, O Lord, it is not so. As our enemies can not stir of themselves without order from thee, and as thy commissions are always all just, so thou seest to the performance, art present at it, which often men can not be; and so nothing is, or can be, done beside thy notice and allowance.

I. His position is this: *The way of man is not in himself*, and repeated more plainly, *It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps;* thus, by a double negation, putting it altogether out of his power. And under this, the positive truth is couched, that *the absolute disposal of all the ways of man is wholly in the supreme hand of God;* according to that, Prov. xx. 24, *Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man, then, understand his own way?* He doth not certainly know anything of his own doings. Even he who seems to know most, to advise and deliberate upon all he does, yet hath no power of his contrivements, knows not which way they will turn, till the event doth clear it, and even then, on looking back, is often amazed at the strange course of things, so far different from, and possibly contrary to all his witty projectings and models. He often does not attain *his own*, but he never fails to accomplish God's purpose, even when his intentions are least from it, yea, when they are most against it. *Let us build a tower*, said they, *lest we be scattered abroad*, Gen. xi.; and that was the very thing which caused their scattering. Joseph was sold by his brethren, that they might not *bow before him*, as he had dreamed; and this brought it to pass. Pharaoh says, *Let us deal wisely;* and that way of oppressing them, lest they should go away, both stirred up God to deliver them, and disposed them to depart. And not to multiply instances, generally in all the ways of men, they have their designs at most times eccentric to God's, but his design holds always, and theirs no further than they are his. Have we not ourselves seen instances of this?

Man consults and determines freely, yet even those inward actings of the mind and will, are ordered and framed by the hand of God; and it can not otherwise be. It is a most vain fancy, to imagine that anything in this is inconsistent with the natural liberty of the will, or that any such liberty can be in any creature, as consists not with his. But because in these inward actings, man finds himself more at his choice, though all is secretly overruled, and in the event of things, God's sovereign disposal is more legible; therefore, these two are expressed with some kind of difference, Proverbs xvi. 9: *A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directs his steps.* That is, when he hath devised, that does not carry it: he may devise and fancy things twenty ways, and think he is taking freely his own course, but he shall find in the issue another hand than his own. *It is not in man that walks*, as the word is here; *he walketh*, and yet the direction of his steps is in another hand. But in the devisings, too, the Lord so acts upon man, that he is turned which way it pleaseth him. Even the heart, and that of the most uncontrolled, the most impetuous torrent, *the king's heart is in his hand, as the rivers of waters: he turneth it whithersoever he will*, Proverbs xxi. 1. When men either determine themselves, or follow unallowed ways for determination (as those, Ezek. xxi. 21), yet are they ordered of God. This he does infallibly and uncontrollably, yet in such a way as there is nothing distorted or violented. *Fortiter et suaviter*—all is so done. Things are in their own course, and men are in their voluntary choice; yet, all subserving the great Lord, and his ends, and his glory, who made them all for himself: as the lower orbs have each their motion, but are all wheeled about with the first. Men know not what he is doing by them, and what in the end he will do with them. With the *rod of Assyria* he scourges his children, and then throws the rod in the fire. Isa. x. 5 and 16. The horseleech draws the blood to fill itself, but the physician intends the patient's health. Men are drawn on by temporal prosperings and successes to drive proudly and furiously, till they drive themselves over the edge of the precipice appointed for their ruin; and all his exalting them for a season, is, in the end, to exalt himself in their greater and more remarkable destruction. *I will get me a name upon Pharaoh, and all his host.* Men are busy, consulting or acting with or against one another, and he sits and laughs at their wisest plots: he alone is in all affairs, doing all his own will in heaven and in earth.

Oh! the folly and blindness of men, who think to carry all to their minds, and walk as masters of their own designs, and never have any serious thought of him in whose hands both they and all their business, and all the affairs of states and kingdoms of this world, are as a piece of wax, to frame them to what he pleases—he who *destroys the counsels of*

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*the wise*, and *makes the diviners mad*, who *pours contempt upon princes, leads counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools;* he who hath set limits to all things, to the *raging of the sea*, making the small sand give check to the great ocean: when it *brake out of the womb*, he had a cradle provided for it, and swaddling-bands, Job xxxviii., and there, though it rolls to and fro, yet it can not get out. Oh! it is ignorance of God makes men rush on, and not inquire whether he be with them or no. Moses was wise and stout, and leader of a numerous people, yet he would not stir on other terms: *If thou go not with us, let us not go up hence.* Well, if men will on their peril, be it; let us reverence God. For even this is for him, and he will gain his glory out of it. *The way of man is not in himself.* If we see their folly, let us learn to be wiser, to keep close to him, and desire his gracious direction to our ways; for it is not in our hands, even when we intend best. And for public affairs, let us rest satisfied in his part. Amid all disorders, he is ordering all wisely and justly, and to them who love him, graciously; therefore we ought not to be dismayed. Let us calm our thoughts with this, remember who it is that rules all, and disposes of peace and war, and all affairs, and we can not wish them in a better hand. I am persuaded that in all the commotions of the world, when a believer thinks on this, it can not but calm and compose his spirit exceedingly: *My Father rules all.* Let this so quiet our fears, as that withal it quicken our prayers, and stir us up to the work of this day—repentant, humble, seeking unto God; seeing all is in his hands, our peace, our liberties, and our enemies, that threaten to bereave us of both. Oh! that the effect of all our troubles and dangers were to drive us more to God, to make us throng more about the throne of grace, to draw forth our King for our help! Oh, our impenitence and unreformedness! That turns him to be our enemy, and that only. Men are nothing. And now, in so great straits, yet so little calling on him! Oh, my brethren, what are we doing? Oh! pray, pray. It is our God that commands all, and we may say it upon his own warrant, *it is prayer that commands him.*

II. The petition: *Correct me*, &c. When the hand of God is stretched out against a people or a person, certainly there is no running from him. The only wise and safe course is, to run unto him. This the prophet does in behalf of his people, and by his example teaches them so to do. As the prophet utters his own sense and desires in this prayer, so he sets it as a copy to the people of God in time of judgment to pray by; shows them the way, which is, not vainly to offer to flee from him, or proudly to stand out against him, to their undoing, but to humble themselves under his mighty hand, supplicating him, yielding themselves, and begging quarter. *Correct me, O Lord, with judgment, not in anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.* That I should suffer for my rebellion, there is good reason; yet, Lord, do not utterly destroy me, which will be, if the weight of thine anger fall upon me. And for that, though indeed we have deserved it, yet there is another vent for it, and, pardon us to say so, fitter matter for it: *Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen:* ver. 25: let it go out that way. So we see the supplication hath these two particulars in it, an *aversion* and a *diversion;* an *aversion* of the anger of God upon his own people under correction, and a *diversion* of it upon his and their enemies; Lord, turn from us, and pour it out there. The *aversion* is presented qualified with an humble submission, declaring expressly they decline not that correction of God, but only deprecate his consuming anger. *Correct me, O Lord, but with judgment*, that is, with measure; such as the discretion and love of a father resolves on toward a child, Thus much will I correct him for his good, and no further.

*Not in thine anger.* God is pleased to express his displeasure against sin by wrath and anger, even toward his own children. But the anger which here the prophet entreats exception from, for the church, is anger opposed to judgment, unbounded, destroying anger, that knows no limits nor stop, but the devouring of those against whom it is kindled. This is spoken in our language, but it is to be understood in a way suiting the purity of God. In him truly is no passion at all, much less any that is not ordered by wisdom and judgment. He is not carried in heat beyond his purposed measure, but knows well how far he intends to go with any, and goes no farther. But as his anger means his just punishing of sin, so his unlimited anger signifies no other than his just proceeding in punishment, to the utter destruction of inflexible sinners; and to this is opposed here, his *correcting with judgment*, that is, in a fatherly, gracious moderation, such as does not utterly ruin and cut off, but indeed reclaims and converts sinners unto him.

This submission and yieldance to a measured correction, is a thing most reasonable: they that know anything aright of themselves and God, will not refuse it.

*First*, reflecting on their own sinfulness, which when truly discovered, even where there is least, yet is there enough of it to justify even utter destruction. Therefore have we good reason unrepiningly to receive such moderate correction from the hand of God as he thinks fit, and to wonder that it is no more. It is one true character of repentance under the rod, to *accept the punishment of our iniquity*, to have our untamed spirits brought low, to stoop to God, to acknowledge our punishment to be far less than our iniquity, and that it is of his goodness *that we are not consumed*, as the church confesses,

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Lam. iii. 22. Though we feel it heavy, and the measure hard, yet self-knowledge and conscience of sin will lay the soul low, and make it quiet, so that it will say nothing, or if anything, it will be confession of its own guiltiness and the righteousness of God; still clearing him in all, as it is, Psalm li. 4, and using that other, Psalm cxix. 137; whatsoever is so inflicted, *Righteous art thou, O Lord, and just are thy judgments.* Which words a good king used, being put in prison, and hardly dealt with. So the psalmist, Psalm xxxviii. 3: *There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sin.* He justifies God's anger by his own sin. Thus Daniel makes confession for this people, under the very captivity here threatened, when it had lasted out the full term. See Dan. ix.

And knowing our sin, ought we not to allow God the clearing of his own justice, his purity and hatred of sin, in punishing it? And, possibly, he will punish sin most exemplarily here, in those who are nearest him, his own people and children; he can least endure it there. This, especially, when we consider his sovereignty and greatness, that he is tied to no account of his actings; and though we did not see so clear reason for our sufferings in our deservings, there is reason enough in his will. And this, well considered, would bring us to much humble submission in all. *I was dumb*, says David, *I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.* Psalm xxxix. 9. The bishop of Troyes meeting Attila marching toward the city, asked who he was. *I am*, said he, *the scourge of God.* Upon this, he set open the gates to him; but God marvellously restrained the soldiers in that city.

But yet further, as our own guiltiness, and God's righteousness and greatness, plead for this compliance with his chastisements, so even his goodness, and our own profit in them. There is in his chastising of his own people very much mercy, that they *may not be condemned with the world.* 1 Cor. xi. 32. Their afflictions have a secret stamp of love on them: *By this is the iniquity of Jacob purged*, &c. He purifies a people in his furnace, that they may be holy unto him; gives his own many sweet experiences of secret support and comfort in affliction, and seasonable delivery out of it, and brings them forth with advantage. *The peaceable fruits of righteousness.* Heb. xii. 11. He humbles and purges a people, or a person, by his rods, and prepares them for greater mercies, to enjoy them both more sweetly and usefully: renews his covenant and the mutual endearments of love between himself and his people, according to the gracious promises made to his people, in relation to this very judgment here threatened, and after inflicted on them. See Isaiah liv.; Ezek. xxxvi.

We, possibly, think it strange that our pressures and troubles still continue, and rather grow upon us than abate; but we judge not wisely concerning this, the most part cursing and repining, others falling into a dead, hopeless stupidness, not caring what becomes of things. But our best course were, to turn to him who smites us, to acknowledge our rebellions and his justice, to eye men less, and God more, in our sufferings, and to confess that our provocations exceed all that is come upon us; to fall down humbly before God, and take submissively his chastisement, saying, *Correct me, O Lord, but with judgment;* and with the church, *I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him.* Mic. vii. 9.

Thus, likewise, in private personal correctings, let us learn to behave ourselves meekly and humbly, as the children of so great and good a Father; whatsoever he inflicts, not to murmur, nor entertain a fretful thought of it. Besides the undutifulness and unseemliness of it, how vain is it! What gain we by struggling and casting up our hand to cast off the rod, but the more lashes? Our only way is, to kneel and fold under his hands, and kiss his rod, and, even while he is smiting us, to be blessing him, sending up confessions of his righteousness, and goodness, and faithfulness, only entreating for the turning away of his wrath, though it should be with the continuing of our affliction. That is here the style of the prophet's prayer, *Correct me, O Lord, but not in anger.* And, according to this suit, even where troubles are chastisements for sin, yet a child of God may find much sweetness, reading much of God's love in so dealing with him, in not suffering him to grow wanton and forget him, as, in much ease, even his own children sometimes do. And as they may find much of God's love to them in sharp corrections, they may raise and act much of their love to him in often-repeated resignments and submissions of themselves, and ready consenting to, yea, rejoicing in his good pleasure, even in those things which to their flesh and sense are most unpleasant.

Now, to the *petition*, the averting of his anger. That is the great request of them who know and fear him; and there is high reason for it. The heaviest sufferings are light without it, but the least ingredient of that adds inexpressible weight to the smallest affliction. This was the thing, it is likely, which made the visage of death so sad to holy men in Scripture, David, Hezekiah, &c., that in those times it had some character of God's anger against them upon it; came to them as a messenger of displeasure. So a thing, small in itself, may be a great curse. To be cast out unburied is no great matter. Natural men slight it: *Cælo tegitur, qui non habet urnam.* There is little difference, to lie eaten of beasts above ground, or of worms beneath. Yet, when foretold to a man as a judgment denounced from God, as against

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that king, Jeremiah xxii. 19, it hath its own weight, carrying some stamp of God's despising him. And though a man feels it not when it is done, yet he feels it, looking on it beforehand, especially as threatened of God; sees himself, as it were, dragged about and torn.

Now, if any little particular cross, marked with God's present anger, becomes so heavy, how much more is his abiding, prolonged wrath, the thing here spoken of—*anger*, to which no bound is set! That, says he, in the name of his people, *would bring me to naught*. There is no standing before it; it will make the stoutest and proudest to shake, yea, shakes them to pieces. If the *wrath of a king* be to meaner men *as the roaring of a lion* (Prov. xix. 12), how much more terrible, even to kings themselves, is the wrath of God! This great King whose voice shakes the mountains, and makes the earth to tremble, armies of terrors and deaths are nothing to a look of his angry countenance. *If he withdraw not his anger, the proud helpers stoop under him.* Job ix. 13. The helpers of pride, the great Atlases of the world, who are thought to bear up all, those who, for their wit and power, are thought the supporters of the kingdoms, how soon are they crushed to pieces by a touch of this anger of God, and *perish at the rebuke of his countenance! O Lord*, says that holy man, Psalm xc. 11, considering the frailty of poor man, and the power of God, *who knows the power of thine anger? Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath;* full as much, yea, far more terrible than we can apprehend it.

They who dare go on in ways wherein it may be but suspected that he is against them, oh! they know him not. Let us consider, and fear before him; and, for the land, still entreat the turning away of his wrath, rather than deliverances from any pressures: Lord, while thou thinkest good further to afflict us, so as to draw us nearer to thee, we are content, yea, we will bless thee; but whatsoever thou do with us, suffer not thy hot displeasure to arise against us, for then we are undone. So this is all a soul under his hand, in affliction, ought to say, *Correct me, but not in wrath, lest thou bring me to nothing:* thou knowest I can not stand before that. He is pleased to look to this, and to express it as that which moderates his anger, even when justly incensed; Isa. lvii. 16; *I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.* Lord, if thou wilt, now quickly and how easily couldst thou break into pieces, or sink into nothing, not only me, a little atom of it, but the entire frame of this whole world; and, therefore, strive not with me. This Job often represents, and God is pleased to move himself to restrain his wrath and draw forth his mercy by it. His great compassion lays hold on such considerations. See Psalm lxxviii. 38, 39, and Psalm ciii. 14. And this may furnish great confidence to souls under a sense of wrath, that do but fall down and entreat for mercy. He who so often prevents us, when we seek it not, will he cast any one away who seeks and sues for it?

The *diversion* of this anger briefly relates to the heathen, the professed and obdurate enemies of God and his church; *q. d.* Thy wrath, O Lord, may have its course, and yet spare thy people. There is matter enough for it round about, that is good for nothing else; and good reason for it, besides all other wickedness, their spite and cruelty against thy people: *For they have eaten up Jacob.*

Note the character of the ungodly, who are fit fuel for this fire, *That know not, and call not on thy name;* that profess not, pretend not to be thine. Tremble, you who are too like these, though reputed among the people of God. Seek the knowledge of God, and worship him, families and persons, lest this curse come upon you.

Now, this is a prophetical foretelling of the utter destruction of the church's enemies whereas the church is *corrected in measure*, and not destroyed. She is first punished; but they that come last, the enemies, the heaviest wrath falls down there, and smothers them, ends on them, and makes *a full end* of them. Jer. xxx. 11. The belief of this may uphold the faithful in the church's greatest distresses. When at the lowest, then the wrath is nearest changing place and removing to her enemies.

And this is to be so desired and prayed for, in reference to the implacable enemies of God, that we should beware we mix nothing of our own interest or passion with it. As wrath in God is without any disturbance *æstuas et tranquillus es*, so somewhat like is the desire of it in the godly, a calm, undistempered love of the name of God. And so shall the saints rejoice in the final victory and triumph of Christ over all his enemies, and their final ruin in that day when they shall be made his footstool. Then they shall have a pure complacency and delight in his justice; that shall make all even. And why are we disquieted, if we hope for that day?

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## SERMON XXV.

### MERCY DESPISED, AND THE CONTEMPT PUNISHED.

### Isaiah xxx. 15—18.

For thus saith the Lord God, the holy One of Israel, In returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength; and ye would not.

But ye said, No, for we will flee upon horses, therefore shall ye flee: And we will ride upon the swift, therefore shall they that pursue you be swift.

One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one: at the rebuke of five shall ye flee, till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on a hill.



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And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him.

In the sentence of that greatest and biggest judgment that ever yet came on the world, the universal deluge, as we have it Gen. vi., that word doth most lively express the reason of it, *My Spirit shall not always strive with man.* For thus it is, while he spares even his own people, he is at a continual strife with them by gracious entreaties and mercies, by advices, and warnings, and threatenings, still contesting; that is the way, he uses in the contest, on his part, against refusals, and revolts, and rebellions on their part. Thus here.

The question between him and his people here, is about the help of Egypt: this God often declares to be wholly against his mind and their own good: yet they on all occasions had so strong a mind to it that they could not be diverted. The prophet here hath his message concerning this point, to preach it, and to write it, to remain *ad perpetuam rei memoriem*, as they speak, *that it may be for the time to come, for ever and ever;* ver. 8; shows them plainly, that this course was wholly without the counsel and consent of God, yea, directly against it, and that it should succeed accordingly: *The strength of Pharaoh shall be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion;* it shall prove to you according to its name, *a land of distress and trouble*, instead of help. And if you would know what would suit that other name of Egypt better, that were humble yieldance to God, and confidence in him: your *Rahab*, your best *Egypt*, your truest *strength*, were *to sit still.* Ver. 7. This is here again represented to them, so gladly would he reclaim them.

*For thus saith the Lord.*] The words have, 1st, God's express *advice* to his people. 2dly, Their peremptory *refusal* of it. 3dly, His just *sentence* passed upon their obstinacy. The *advice* is prefaced with the usual words of the prophets, *Thus saith the Lord;* for in that lies the dignity and authority of the message. His advices, doubtless, are the choicest and the safest: yea, his counsels are all commands, requiring duly the most absolute obedience.

*The Lord Jehovah.*] Were but his word known to be *his*, and taken so, how would our souls melt, and yield to the impressions of it, when we read or hear! Oh! learn to hear him, to take every word of his as from his own mouth, every time the law is read, as if thou heard it from Mount Sinai. So think, now God commands me to fear him, as if you heard him speaking from heaven. That would level more our opinion of men, and make less difference of his messengers.

Another word of his style is here added, *The holy One of Israel.* This is much to be considered by his people, the holiness of his nature, and withal, the nearness of his relation to them, and so, the reverence and obedience we owe him, our deep engagement to holiness, as his people, his children. This is his image in us, if we are truly such. All his sons and daughters are like him, *holy as he is holy.* The blind, base world thinks it a word of disgrace, but the great God owns it as a chief point of his glory, a diamond of his crown, and frequently expresses it as one of the titles he most delights to be known by, *Holy, Holy, Holy.* And as this is beheld, the heart can not but be filled with reverence, and holy fear, and self-abasement; as this prophet here, in seeing the vision, and hearing that voice, *Then said I, Wo is me, for I am undone.* Isa. vi. 5.

This is here used fitly to scare his people from rebellion, the unholy way on which they were so bent; and the rather because they were grown weary of it, and desired not to hear this word. Ver. 9. Therefore it is the more repeated; *Because ye despise this word*, ye shall hear it the more. Ver. 12. The prophet will neither be mocked nor threatened out of it; he will both deliver his message, and give the King who sent him his own title. And oh, that we knew him according to it, and understood what this means, *The holy One of Israel!* He was a holy man, and knew something, who yet confesses his own ignorance in that point (there must be some knowledge of it, to discover ignorance of it): *I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.* Prov. xxx. 3.

*In returning and rest.*] In leaving off the pains ye take in messages and journeys to Egypt, in humbly and quietly composing yourselves to wait on me, and trust in me; submitting to my hand, in what I bring upon you, and from the same hand, mine alone, expecting deliverance in due time. This does not bar the use of all lawful means, but as it shuts out perplexing cares and turmoil even in those good means, so it expressly forbids all intermeddling with all unwarranted ways, such as God doth not direct us to, but rather dissuades us from.

And if this be the safest way, surely it is the sweetest, easiest way. There can not be anything easier than to be quiet and sit still, to rest and trust, and so be safe and strong. And as it is in this particular, so generally, it is in all the ways of God; they are the only easy, peaceable, sweet ways, with the least pains, and the surest advantage. And the ways of disobedience, besides what comes after, are, even for the present, more turbulent, laborious, perplexed ways. What a hurry and pother are men put in, to serve their lusts, or their ambition, when, if they attain their object, it does not quit the cost and the pains; besides that if their hopes mock them, and after long pursuit, they embrace a shadow. Thus men woo their own vexation, and take a great deal more pains to be miserable, than they would be put to, to make them happy

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What a pity to pay so dear for nothing, to give their riches and treasures, and to be at pains too to carry them to, *a people that shall not profit them (et oleum et operam)*, both their expense and travel laid out to no purpose! The voluptuous, or covetous, or ambitious, how do they project, and drudge, and serve their wretched lusts, who, when they have done one piece of service, are still to begin another! And what is the profit of all, but shame and sorrow at last? The humble, sober-minded Christian saves all that pains, and hath his heart's desire in quietness and confidence.* His great desire and delight is, God; and, by desiring and delighting, he hath him. Psalm xxxvii. 4: *Delight thou in the Lord, and he shall give thee thy heart's desire* —HIMSELF; and then, surely, thou shalt have all, Any other thing *commit to him, and he shall bring it to pass.*

Strange! men might have God at an easier rate than the poorest vanities they are hunting after, and yet they will not; a full fountain of living waters is ready provided, yet they will be at pains to hew out little cisterns, which, after all their pains, are but *broken cisterns, and can hold no water.*

I know not what men are doing, still at work, when they might better sit still, troubling themselves and all about them, and can not well tell for what. Oh, the sweet peace of believing and obeying God! They truly conquer, sitting still: *Sedendo vincebant.* In all times, they are safe under the shadow of the Almighty; are *strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

*And ye would not, but said, No.*] Thus men sometimes flatly reject his counsels, and when they are not so gross as plainly to speak it out, yet say so in doing so, and for good manners' sake will blanch it with reproaching the messengers; will have it to be not God's mind, but men's own fancy, a false vision; will own nothing for truth but what suits their humor and design. First, they resolve on their course without acquainting God, ask not his advice; then, when he is pleased to give it by his messengers, they reject it, not under that name, as God's advice, but will not have it pass for this, because it crosses their already-determined course. If it favored that, then, no question, it were welcome enough as his word. That is meant by those words, ver. 10: *Which say to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits.* And so they used Jeremiah long after, in this very point. Jer. xlii. 2. And so they go on to take their own course; *No, but we will flee upon horses.*

And this is the nature of carnal hearts; they are generally inclined to rebel, and take a way of their own, casting away the counsels of God, as not suiting with the state, or with wit, or points of honor. They find more feeling and real substance in sensual things than in the promises of God: these seem airy, unsure things to them; therefore, they would still see apparent means, and where these fail, think it but a fancy to rest on God. They dare not trust him so but as withal to do for themselves, although nothing can be done but what he forbids, which therefore can not be done without giving up with him, and departing from their trust on him. All this cleaves to us, and much cause have we to suspect ourselves, when it is but doubtful that there appears little or no evidence of God's counsel or good-will to a business, but rather clear characters of his dislike, and much of our own will, a soul, uncontrollable bent to it; when we are conscious to ourselves of this, that either we have not asked advice of God at all, or very slightly, not being much upon our knees with it; or, possibly, in asking his advice, have brought our answer with us, in our own breasts, the lying oracle that making answer, and we consenting to delude ourselves, nor hearkening to anything that does not clink and sound to our purpose.

Our hearts are exceedingly deceitful, and particularly in this point of withdrawing our trust from God, and leaving off to follow him in his ways, to trust on the arm of flesh, on policy and strength, and self-resolved undertakings, rather than on him without these. Evil men think that those who advise them to trust on God are silly fellows, who know not what belongs to policy and reasons of state. A fancied wisdom it is, that men are enamored with, and look not to a higher wisdom, consider not God, that *he also is wise.* Isa. xxxi. 2. There is, I think, in that word a tart scorn of the folly of their seeming wisdom. Be it that you are wits, yet you will not deny some wisdom to God: *Yet he also is wise.* So they think not on his power neither; therefore he puts them in mind (ver. 3), that *the Egyptians are men.*

Well, if you be resolved on that course, says God, then know mine too, that I am resolved upon: *Therefore ye shall flee*, shall have fleeing enough; and if you be *swift, they that pursue you shall be swifter*, and *one* shall serve to *chase a thousand, the rebuke* the very terror of one. This is the condition of the mightiest people and the best-appointed armies, when forsaken of God. There is no strength nor courage, nor anything of worth in any of the creatures, but as it is derived from God: it is dependant on him in the continuance and use of it. *Why are thy valiant men swept away? They stood not, because the Lord did drive them.* Jer. xlvi. 15. We have seen this, and the turn of it on both sides, how men become a prey to any party when the terror from God is upon them.

Therefore, learn we to fear him, to beware of all ways wherein we may justly apprehend him to be against us. Cleave to him and to his truth, when it is lowest, and when no human means of help appear, then think you

* Vacat temperantia. Sed non habebunt requiem, qui bestiam adorant.—SENECA.

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hear him saying to you, *Stand till, and see the salvation of the Lord.*

Ver. 18. *Therefore will the Lord wait.*] There is no language of men nor of angels fit to express the graciousness of God's punishments and the threatenings of them: as if they were violently drawn and forced from him, but mercy, and the sweet promises thereof, naturally flowing from him. Thus here, he is forced to give up his people to their own counsels, because they will not follow his advices. He entreats them to be quiet, and let him do for them; but seeing they will not *sit still*, and be safe at his direction, they must run their own course, and fall in it. But it can not pass so, they must not be quite given over; the Lord hath an interest in them which he will not lose. They must indeed for a time eat the fruit of their own ways, and that is not a season to show them favor; but the Lord will wait a better hope. He is resolved to show them mercy, and will find his own time for it: *Therefore will* HE *wait, that he may be gracious.*

And this is he moved to, according to his gracious nature, by the greatness of their distress and desolation. Though procured by themselves, by their great, their inflexible stubbornness, yet he pities to see them so *left as a beacon on the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on a hill. And therefore will the Lord wait.* Thus we have the proper arguings of free mercy, which otherwise, to our narrow thoughts, may seem strange and somewhat inconsequent. Such a *therefore* as this, so unexpectedly changing the strain, doth genuinely and sweetly follow upon the premises, when free love is the medium: that intervening in the midst, makes the sweet turn. Your iniquities prevail to bring you low, and lengthen out your calamities; *therefore*, I will let that have its course, and will stay till my fit time come to do you good. Meanwhile I will lie hid, and be as sitting still; but when that time comes, I will get up and show myself. *He will be exalted, that he may have mercy on you; for the Lord is a God of judgment.* He is wise, and just, and good, and knows his measures of afflicting his people, his times and ways of delivering them, and of bringing destruction on his enemies, and will not slip this season; and it being so, this certainly follows, that they are *blessed that wait on him.*

Observe, 1. The strong inclination of God to show mercy. He would willingly have his people to find nothing but ease; he delights in the prosperity of his servants, would have them constantly have a sweet, peaceful, yea, cheerful life, by constant walking in his ways; but they are often the enemies of their own peace, grieve his Spirit, and turn him to be their own enemy. But he can not persist in that to his own; he longs to be at his way of mercy and loving kindness again. *He retains not his anger for ever*, because mercy pleases him. He inflicts judgment for sin, but what he delights in is mercy. Therefore, says the prophet, Lam. iii. 32, 33, *Though he cause grief, yet he will have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies: For he doth not willingly afflict the children of men.* Though he doth *grieve them*, yet, *not willingly;* they themselves procure and draw on that, by *grieving his Spirit.* But he willingly shows mercy, for that abounds: there is such multitude and plenty of it, that, as to full breasts, it is a pleasure to him to let it forth. The two words, *gracious* and *merciful*, which stand first in the name of God, Exodus xxxiv. 6, the one signifies *free grace*, the other, *tender bowels of mercy.* This is no emboldment to continue in sin, yea, it is of all things the most fit encouragement and inducement to a sinner to return from sin; and so it is used and urged throughout the Scriptures. See Isaiah xxxi. 5, 6, and lv. 7; Jer. iii. 12. In public calamities, where a people are charging the cause thereof upon themselves, searching their hearts and their ways, and turning unto God, humbly acknowledging their iniquity, and entreating pardon, oh! this is the thing he would not despise. Yea, it is what he looks and longs for, and upon that would readily forget all past disloyalties. See Jer. iii. 1. Yea, at the sound of their repentings, his bowels would resound with compassion by a secret sympathy and harmony, as one string, well tuned to another, stirs when it is touched. Thus, Jer. xxxi. 18–20.

This a sinner shall find in his returning unto God, more than we can express or promise in his name. Oh, *he waits to be gracious*, meets thee graciously. Yea, he hath first touched thy heart secretly, hath first drawn it toward himself, before it stirred, or had a thought that way. Now no more upbraidings or remembrance of all thy wanderings: an act of perfect oblivion is past. *For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.* Jer. xxxi. 34. Is thy heart any little softened, and relents it toward him? Then, the controversy is ended, and his thoughts are now, how to comfort thee. Art thou busy inditing accusations against thyself? Then makes he it his part to wipe away and blot out. Comest thou home with a heart full of holy shame and grief, and thy mouth full of humble confessions of thy disobedience? Then know, it is thy tender-hearted Father meets thee, most ready to forgive thee, yea, to interrupt thy confessions in the middle with embraces and kisses of love.

But, alas! we preclude ourselves from the sweet experiences of these tender mercies, by the hardness of our hearts, and by the lightness and vanity of them. Oh that indignity, our God still *waiting to be gracious*, to heap up more of his love to us, but we are busied in other things, and not at leisure to wait on him! Oh! what are they, these things that take us up? Great matters? Alas! sorry trifles, all day long. And when we are at

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leisure, yet we are not at leisure; for then we must take our ease, must go to sleep, and so still he is put off and forced to retire, after he has stayed till *his head be filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night.* Cant. v. 2.

Observation 2. The Lord doth most exactly and wisely measure both the degree and the time of his people's afflictions. Though they have brought them upon themselves, and justly he might leave them so, this he will not do: he is *a God of judgment.* This is largely and sweetly expressed, in a resemblance of husbandry, Isa. xxviii. 24–29. He knows how much and how long outward or inward trouble is fit for every one, and where the less will serve, will not use the more. He knows what need some spirits have to be bruised and broken beyond others, either under disgrace or poverty, or the proper pressures of the spirit within, apprehensions of wrath, or withdrawments, at least, of comforts; and hath set his days for deliverance of his church, and of every believer under affliction. So, the style of the prophet, *In that day*, speaking as of a certain prefixed day, and that, no power or wit of man can disappoint. And it is so chosen, as it shall be evident to be the fittest, that it could not so well either have been sooner or later; all things concurring to make it most seasonable to his people, and honorable to his own name. Hab. ii. 3: *The vision is for the appointed time: though it tarry, wait for it; it shall come, and shall not tarry.* That is strange, *Though it tarry, it shall not tarry.* But in the original, there are two words, the one importing an undue slowness or constrained retardment: that can not be so, *it shall not tarry, though it tarry;* that is, though it stay itself, and come not till the *appointed time:* so the other word signifies. Thus, Psalm cii. 13: *Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion; for the set time is come.* Now, for this the Lord waits. It is not through want of love, but from abundance of wisdom, that he delivers not sooner. He hath chosen the fittest time, in his all-discerning wisdom; yet, there is in this love, an earnest kind of longing that the time were come. Thus here, *he waits to be gracious*, and he *will be exalted*, will cheerfully and gladly raise up himself, and appear to show mercy to his people, and bring his enemies low; coming forth, as it were, to judgment, and sitting down on his throne. In which posture he was not seen while they prevailed and triumphed, and his church were under their oppression; but when the time of their restoring and consolation comes, he then is to sit on his throne, and so is exalted to show them mercy. Hence the psalmist so often desires that the Lord would arise, and utters predictions, assuring that he will arise, and exciting his people to rejoice in that. Psalm ix. 7, 8, and Psalms xcvi., xcvii., and xcviii.

Thus, the church, in her saddest condition, ought hopefully to remember and rest on it, that the day is determined, and can not fail. Our salvation is in God. He laughs at his enemies, when they are at the top of prosperity and pride; sees that their day is coming. Now, certainly the firm persuasion of this would much stay our minds; but either we do not believe, or we do not improve and use these truths, and draw that comfort from them which abounds in them. Our God loses no time: *he is waiting* till his appointed time. And if *he wait*, it becomes us so to do. That is our duty here, *to wait on him.* This faith does, and so, makes not haste; neither goes out to any undue means, nor frets impatiently within at the deferring of deliverance, but quietly rests on God, and waits for him. This, as it is our duty, is also our happiness; and thus it is here expressed. Upon consideration that *the Lord waits to be gracious, and will be exalted to show mercy*, the prophet is carried to this acclamation, in respect to the happiness of believers, *O! blessed are they that wait for him!* Their thoughts fall in and meet with his: for he is *waiting* for the same day they *wait* for, and if he be not disappointed, they shall not. We are naturally irregular in our affections and notions, and the only right ordering of them is, by reducing them to conformity with the ways and thoughts of God, which keep an unalterable, fixed course, as the heavens; the way, I say, to rectify our thoughts is, to set them by his, as clocks and watches, which so readily go wrong, too slow or to fast, are ordered by the sun, which keeps its course. Oh! that we were more careful to set and keep our hearts in attendance on God, winding them up in meditation upon him, and conforming them in their motions and desires to his disposal in all; for all that concerns us, and for the times of all, being quiet, yea, glad in this, which the psalmist makes his joy: *My times are in thy hand, O Lord.* Psalm xxxi. 15. And surely that is the best. Were I to choose, they should be in no other hands, neither mine own, nor any others. Alas! what silly, poor creatures are we! How little do we know what is fit for us in any kind, and still less what time is fit for any mercy to be bestowed upon us! When he withholds mercies or comforts for a season, it is but till the due season; it is but to ripen them for us, which we in childish haste would pluck green, when they would be neither so sweet nor so wholesome. Therefore it is our wisdom and our peace, to resign all things into his hands, to have no will nor desires, but only this, that we may still *wait for him.* All shall be well enough, if we but get rid of the vain hopes and expectations of this world. None who indulge them are so well but they are still waiting for somewhat further. Now, amid all that, our soul may say with David, and speak it to God as known to him, that it is so indeed: *And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee. My expectation* or *waiting* (the same word that is here)

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*is all placed upon thee.* Is it so, brethren? Are our hearts gathered in from other things, to this attendance, while the most about us are gaping for the wind? Have we laid all up in God, to desire and *wait for him*, and pretend to nothing beside him?

I would do so, may a soul think. but can I hope that he will look on me, and bestow himself on such a one as I am? To that I say nothing but, look on his word. If thou thinkest that warrant good enough, here it is for thee, that they are certainly *blessed that wait for him.* This is assurance enough. Never was any one who *waited for him*, miserable with disappointment. Whosoever thou art that dost indeed desire him, and desirest to *wait for him*, surely thou resolvest to do it in his ways, wherein he is to be found, and wilt not willingly depart from these; that were foolishly to disappoint thyself, and not to be true to thine own end. Therefore look to that: do not keep company with any sin. It may surprise thee sometimes as an enemy, but let it not lodge with thee as a friend.

And mind this other thing, prescribe nothing to God. If thou hast begun to wait, faint not, give not up, wait on still. It were good reason, were it but upon little hope at length to find him: but since it is upon the unfailing assurance, that in the end thou shalt obtain, what folly were it, to lose all for want of waiting a little longer! See Psalm xl. 1. *In waiting I waited—waited, and better waited*—but all was overpaid: He did hear me. So Psalm cxxx., *I wait and wait until the morning.* These two joined are all, and may well go together, *earnest desire* and *patient attendance.*

These words, as others of the prophet, which we call *consolations*, I conceive, look beyond the deliverances from outward troubles, to the great promise of the *Messiah.* Sure I am the strain of something following is too high for that, and can not but have an aspect to the days of the gospel, as that ver. 26. Now the Lord *had* set his time, that *fulness of time* for the coming of the blessed Son in the flesh; and till that time *came*, the the Lord was *waiting to be gracious*, to open up his treasures more fully than ever before; which when he did, then *was he exalted to show mercy*, and exalted in showing mercy. Christ himself was lifted up on the cross, there to show that rich mercy that is for ever to be admired: lifted up to show his bowels as the word is here. Did he not let us see into his heart, there to read that love that can no otherwise be uttered? And in that, the Lord was most eminently manifested a *God of judgment*, wisdom, and justice, and mercy, all shining brightest in that contrivance. There he was lifted up, and then, after that, lifted up into glory, who is the *Desire of the nations*, the salvation and joy of all ages. both before and after. Before he came, they were from one age to another *waiting;* and more particularly at the time of his coming, God stirred up the expectation of believers to welcome him, being so near. See Luke ii. 25, 38. And in all times, before and after that, he is the happiness of souls, and *they* only *are blessed that wait for him.* Whether you do, or do not, believe it now, the day is coming when all the world shall know it to be so.

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## SERMON XXVI.

### CONFESSION AND PRAYER OF FAITH.

JEREMIAH xiv. 7—9.

O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many, we have sinned against thee.
O the hope of Israel, the Savior thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land and as a way-faring man, that turneth aside to tarry for a night?
Why shouldst thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that can not save? yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.

If we look backward and forward in this chapter, we find the three great executioners of God's anger on the world foretold, as having received commission against this people.

In all troubles, felt or feared, this is still the great resource of them who are acquainted with it, and can use it, Prayer. And their labor in it is not altogether lost, even where judgment is determined and unalterable, as here it was; for some mitigations of time and measure are desirable, and by prayer attainable; and whatsoever there is of that kind, the prayers that have been made long before, have had a concurrence and influence in it. And always, at the least, prayer carries the personal good of them that present it: if it return unto their bosom, as David speaks, without effect for others, it returns not thither empty, it brings peace and safety thither with it; they save their own souls. The mourners, if they turn not away the destroyers' weapons from the city, yet, they procure one sent along with them, with an ink horn for their own marking and sparing, Ezek. ix. 3. And were there nothing in this, nor any following effect, prayer hath within itself its own reward. Did we know it, we should think so. The very dignity and delight of so near access to God, to speak with him so freely, this in itself is the most blessed and honorable privilege that the creature is capable of; it is a pledge of heaven, something of it beforehand, a standing in pretension to the life of angels: *Angelorum candidati*, as Tertullian speaks; it is to be but *a little lower*, as the word is, Psalm viii. 5. Many practise a form; few know the vital sweetness of it.

Oh, my brethren, be aspiring to more heav-

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enliness, and a higher bent of the soul in it than as yet you know, and use it more that way; use it for yourselves and others, this whole land, these kingdoms, the church of God through the whole earth. No times that we have seen, wherein it hath been more needful, and none wherein less plentiful. There is no one that *stirs up himself to lay hold on God*. Some, no doubt, there are in these times; yet, so few, so general a decay and negligence in the zeal and frequency of prayer, that, to speak of, there is none. And is it not so now with us? Many discourse one to another, and yet, most to little or no purpose: but little is spoken where nothing would be lost, in humble supplication to God. And this is the saddest sign of that long lasting trouble. Oh! pity the kingdom and yourselves, and learn to pray.

This prayer of the prophet is made up of the two usual ingredients, *confession* and *petition*.

*O Lord, Jehovah.*] A chief point of prayer is, the presenting of the soul before God, remembering to whom we speak, that is to the great king, the holy God; which this expresses, where it is indeed, when we say, O Lord, or should remind us of, when we forget it, to have such apprehensions as we can reach of his glorious majesty. Consider, if we find our hearts filled with him when we are before him. Oh! how seldom think we that he is God, even while we speak to him, and how quickly do we forget it, and let slip that thought! When we have anything of it, how soon are we out of it, and multiplying vain words! For such are all those we utter to him without this. Oh! pray to be taught this point of prayer, and watch over your hearts in prayer, to set them thus when you enter to Him, and to call them in when they wander, and pluck them up when they slumber, to think where they are, and what they are doing.

*Our iniquities testify against us.*] Confession fitly begins. All the difference between God and us lies in this, *our iniquities*. Now humble confession is one great article of pacification; it is a thing judgment certainly aims at, a thing mercy is mainly moved with. See Hos. v. 15. Psalm xxxii. 5. Jeremiah xxxi. 18.

When we are to encounter any enemy or difficulty, it is sin weakens us. Now, confession weakens it, takes away the power of accusations, anticipates the great accuser, leaves him nothing to say, takes off the stroke of sins testifying against us, says, you need not, I confess all, and more than you can say.

For this, a right knowledge of God's law is requisite, and then a diligent use of it; laying it to our way, as a straight rule to show our unevenness, which, without it, we discern not. Set that glass before you, but withal beg light from Heaven to see by; otherwise our applications to this work of searching our hearts, and comparing them with the law, is but poring in the dark, where nothing is to be seen of our spots though we set the glass before us, and open the leaves of it. *The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord*, Prov. xx. 27; but it is so when he lights it, and directs a man by it into himself, to see the secret corners and pollutions that lie hid within him. Sin discovered by this light, appears in its native vileness, and that makes lively resentments and confessions.

Their confession of sin is varied here in three several expressions, and no one of them is empty; the adding one to another, testifying a deep sense, and each of them having much under it, when issuing from an awakened, sensible mind.

*Our iniquities testify against us.*] This expresses a deep and clear conviction. Our iniquities are undeniable; they stand up and give in witness against us, and we can not except against them, nor deny the charge they lay.

And thus it shall be with all transgressors in their day, and with each of us. It is not far off, our particular day, it is coming, when the most ignorant and impudent shall be forced to know and the most obstinate and impudent shall be forced to acknowledge their iniquities. Such as now will not be warned and convinced, who hide their sin as men, like Adam, who show themselves in that his children, they (as he was) shall be called for, and forced to come out of the thickets, and convicted of their disobedience. This men find sometimes in a day of distress, when some outward or inward pressure seizes on them, lays on the arrest, and brings them to stand and hear what these witnesses have to say against them. However, there is a day coming for this at the long run, a day of particular judgment for each one, and that great solemn day for altogether: the light of that fiery day shall let them see to read the bill they would not look on sooner. If men would consider this, when sin is speaking them fair and enticing them, in how different a style it will afterward speak, it would spoil the charm of it. As Solomon speaks of the *strange woman*, that *her end is bitter as wormwood* (Prov. v. 4), so are all the ways of sin. Those same sins which look so pleasing and friendly, and entreat thee, shall appear again in another tune, and with other language, to witness against thee, and cry for vengeance. Men think sin evanishes as it is acted, and forget it as if they were to hear no more of it, and know not that it shall be forthcoming again, even thoughts, words, and actions. All is kept for a court-day, *iniquities sealed up in a bag*, as Job speaks, as writs to be produced in the process against thee. Oh, how little know you what the amazement is of a man's sins surrounding him and testifying against him, that he is a rebel against God, and to be condemned! And no scarcity, such multitudes of them, one com-

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pany succeeding another, as that word, Job x. 17: *Thou renewest thy witnesses against me;* not by twos or threes, but by thousands, armies of them. This is more affrightful than to be encompassed with drawn swords, or to see a whole army march up upon a man, it were nothing to these bands mustered up. So Psalm l. 21: *I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.*

There is no way to escape but by prevention, taking a day beforehand to judge thyself, and call these witnesses, and hear them, and pass sentence. This would save the labor. God is desirous to have the matter thus anticipated, and turns it over to thee, to judge thyself, that he may not judge. Why defer we? It is not worth the while and the pains? And then for that day, when it would seem so terrible to have these witnesses stand up, thy safety is, having judged and condemned thyself, to take sanctuary in Christ, and make him thy advocate to answer all for thee. He can and will do it to the full; yea, he hath already answered all that thy sins, were they many more, can say. Oh, happy the man that takes this course! Sin not upon this account: none surely will do that. *These things I write unto you*, saith the apostle, *that ye sin not;* but then, *if any man* not so minded, *do sin*, here is that comfort, *we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* 1 John ii. 1.

*Our backslidings are many.* This is the double die of his people's sins; they are not simple transgressions, but treacheries, revolts, breaches of promises, of covenant and vow, turnings back, goings out from God, adultery, prostituting their hearts to idols, to base lusts; a heart professed to be married to its Maker, running a gadding after strange vanities. And who of us hath not this sadly to say against himself?—How often have I vowed myself thine, and with some kind of hopes and purpose to have been true to it; but how soon hath all evanished! Oh! the unspeakable unfaithfulness, not only of common formal professors, but of real believers! And these provoke God highly, go most to his heart, to be slighted by his own, to whom he hath so particularly shown himself and imparted of his love.

*And we have sinned against thee.*] This that comes last seems to sound least; but I take it as meaning most: as if they would have offered at particular confession, and then seeing such a huge multitude, and no end, were forced to retire, and shut up all in this general word. We might and would speak of many things, but they are too many, we are overwhelmed. What shall we say? *We have sinned against thee.* Thus Job, *I have sinned against thee; what shall I do unto thee?* As in David's confession, Psalm li. 4: *Against thee, thee only have I sinned;* THEE, the great, the holy God, our God. This were our business, instead of much discourse and debate of things, to fall down and confess unto God; to begin at ourselves, our own breaches and backslidings, and then to add the public national guiltiness. Oh! we are a sinful people, and few lay it to heart. All ranks are highly guilty; and where are they who retire and mourn for their abominations? Those continued and multiplied, are the continuers and multipliers of our plagues, sword, and pestilence, and threatenings of famine. If you have a mind to do anything for the land, and for yourselves, your families and your little ones, oh! apply to this work, to confess and bewail our iniquities. It may be, yea, I dare say, it shall be, the Lord will return and have mercy on us.

*O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us.*] In all our approaches unto God, it is a prime thing to take him up according to his name. This is the very ground of access and confidence of sinners, and there is no coming near him without it. We have heard it, that *he is the Lord, merciful and gracious*, &c. Not so much as confessions can be made without this, much less petitions presented. Instead of coming to fall down before him, to acknowledge sin, the soul will run quite away, and, though that were in vain, would seek to hide itself, that it might not at all appear. But apprehending his goodness and readiness to forgive, this draws the heart to him, and being drawn in, this makes it melt before him. In this some Christians mistake much, when they hold off from the apprehensions of God's graciousness, to the end that they may be the more humble and deeply affected with their sins. No, no: this is that which warms, and softens, and makes the soul pliable, fit to receive any form from his hand. Therefore the people of God, and the prophets in their name, still lay hold on that, and interweave it both with their confessions and their petitions, as the main ground of their confidence, in presenting both.

The petition is in these two words, which begin and close—*Do for us—Leave us not.* The rest is argument, backing and pressing the petition with familiar and pathetic expostulations; and in them, the whole strength of the argument lies in a mutual interest, that they are his people, and he is their God. But take the words as they lie.

*Do thou for thy name's sake.*] It is not expressed *what* or *how*, and it is best so: that is referred to Him who knows what is best, which we do not. It is an act of grace in general that is sued for, but for the way and time, all is put in his hand. True it is, that sometimes prayer is, and must be, somewhat more particular upon particular warrant, or upon account of the common liberty that God gives his children, to present freely the particular thoughts and desires of their hearts to him. But it is good always to close thus, or that it be understood so when not expressed, that we resign that matter to him, to make his own choice of things, and use his own way. Only, we entreat his favor, and his

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owning of us and our condition, that he be for us, and do for us. And this is safe and sweet, to let him choose. We often perplex ourselves about that which lies not in our way, and is not our part to be busied in, what things shall be done. This he undertakes for, and will be careful of. Be not afraid. Psalm xxxvii. 5. *Commit thy way, roll thy way upon the Lord, trust on the Lord,* and he will do it; there is no more. In the Hebrew it is, Turn it over to him and be quiet, and let him alone, he will do well enough. Besides that there is all reason for it, if men knew what peace of spirit there is in this resignation, they would choose it before any way that can be thought on, and it never yet repented any one who chose it.

*For thy name's sake.*] This is the unfailing argument, which abides always the same, and hath always the same force. When nothing is to be said for ourselves but guiltiness, yet, this name we may plead by. *Though our iniquities testify against us,* though they return us harsh answers as from thee, speaking nothing but just refusals of our suits and rejecting of ourselves; yet, Lord, remember thy own name, and thence we look for a better answer. *Do* according to that, and *for thy name's sake,* in regard of strangers and enemies, who will reproach thy name in the ruin of thy people; and *for thy name's sake,* in regard of thy people's knowledge of it, and confidence in it, who, in all their straits do expect their help from thee. Thy promises made to them, and thy covenant made with them, in these is *thy name,* and they do cast themselves, and rely on it. Now see whether it may be for thy glory to cast them off. Whatsoever *we* are, look to thine own interest, and do for that; *Do, for thy name's sake.*

In the next clause, and more particularly, a part of his name is expressed, *The hope of Israel.* That is a piece of his royal style, by which he is known in the world. And in this appeareth the wonderful condescension and bounty of God to his creatures, to choose a number of persons, that he will pass his word to engage himself to be theirs: not only to forgive us who are his debtors by our sins, but to become himself a debtor to us by his promises. And he loves to be challenged on them, and pressed with them. It is a maxim of court-flattery, that mean persons ought not to urge the king upon his word; but this greatest King takes nothing better from the meanest of his subjects. Lord, thou hast undertaken the protection of us thy people, and now it lies upon thee, in point of honor and truth, to save us.

*The hope of Israel.*] All people, and every man, have something they rely on and make their hope; and they often choose the most broken, rotten hopes, which fail while they lean upon them, and not only fail, but hurt them, as Egypt proved to Israel. Therefore it proved as a *broken reed,* which not only flew in pieces in their hand, but the splinter ran up into their hand and hurt them. How often have we found it thus, been disappointed, yea, wounded by our vain hopes, *pierced through with many sorrows,* as the apostle speaks of those who love and trust in riches! Therefore Job disclaims this, that he never made gold his god: *If I made gold my hope.* Ch. xxxi. 24. There is a word of one of his friends speaking, ch. xxii. 25, rendered in our translation, *The Almighty shall be thy defence:* the word is in the original, *The Almighty shall be thy gold.* To those who account and make him so, he is both; for they are rich enough in him in the greatest scarcity, and safe enough in him in the greatest danger.

But you who would look to it, inquire each of you well, what is thy hope, what thy heart readiest turns to, and cleaves to, to comfort itself in any distress. Yea, in the times of the greatest ease, what are thy thoughts most biased and turned to, with oftenest and deepest delight? Canst thou say, It is to God?—that thy heart hath got that retreat, and is inured to that, is frequently there throughout the day, turns by, or passes over husband or wife, or children, or riches, or delights, or anything that would stand in thy way, and stays not till it be at him, and there rejoices in his love, sits down under his shadow content and happy, willing that others should rule and share the world as they please? that thou dost not envy them, yea, canst even pity them with all their gay hopes and great projects? yea, though thou do not find at all times, yea, possibly, scarcely at any time, that sensible presence of God, and shining of his clear-discovered love upon thee, yet that still he is thy hope, that thou art at a point with all the world, hast given up all to wait on him, and hope for him, and dost account thyself richer in thy simple hope, than the richest man on earth is in his possessions? Then art thou truly so, for the hope of God is heaven begun, and heaven complete is the possessing of him.

*The Savior thereof.*] Not exempting them from trouble, but saving *in time of trouble.* The reason for Israel's trouble lay in their own sin and security, and their abuse of ease and peace: but yet, they were not left to perish in trouble, but had *a Savior in time of trouble,* who was then most eyed and considered, and found to be so. In the furnace, both the faith of his people, and the truth of his promises, are tried.

The children of God are much beholden to their troubles for clear experiences of themselves and of God. And in this, indeed, is the virtue of faith, to apprehend God as *a Savior in time of trouble,* before he come forth and manifest himself to be so.

Wicked men have their *times of trouble* too, even here, but have no title to this *Savior. Suæ fortunæ fabri*—if themselves or friends, or means can help them, it is well,



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but they can go no further. But the church, the Israel of God, when all help fails on all hands, has one great resource that can not fail, the strong God, her *hope and Savior in time of trouble*, or straitness. When there is no way out, he can cut out a way through the sea, can divide their enemies, or whatsoever is their greatest difficulty, and make a way through the middle of it. Well might Moses say, *Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help?* Deut. xxxiii. 29. Men are under-saviors in outward deliverances; so it is said, Neh. ix. 27: *Thou gavest them saviors;* but he IS THE SAVIOR. All others have their commissions from him. All their strength and all their success, is from him. Without him, no strength, nor wit, nor courage, avail: all falls to pieces when he withdraws his hand. *Give us help from trouble, for*, says the church, *vain is the help of man.* We have found this, if any people ever did, and have had real lectures to teach us to *cease from man; for wherein is he to be accounted of?* Yet, still we are ready to look to multitudes, or to the quality of men who undertake for us. But if we do so, yet shall that prove our shame and disappointment: and it shall never go well with us, till our dependance and confidence come clear off from all creatures, and we fix it entirely upon him who is *our shield and our strength.*

Thus should a soul in particular distress, especially in inward trouble, wherein the help lies most incommunicably and immediately in God's own hand, learn to trust him. And though thou art not clear in thy interest as a believer, yet, plead thy interest as a sinner, which thou art sure of. God in our flesh hath enlarged the nation of Israel; all that will but *look to him*, he is their *Savior: Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth.* Now, he hath styled himself the Savior of sinners; press him by that: Lord, I do *look to thee*, do for me, O *Savior!* Help, I am in trouble. So, in any particular temptation, either to sin, or to distrust because of sin, say, Now, Lord, here is an opportunity for thy power and thy grace to glorify itself. And though thou find thyself sinking, yet believe, and thou shalt not drown.

*Why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land?*] The main thing desired was, his constant abode with them. Some passing deliverances he had wrought; but that was not enough. He came *as a stranger, to stay a night*, refreshed them with a transient visit, and away again. Thus we may say, He hath still done for us. When we were in desperate straits, he came and helped; but then we were left to such counsels as bred us new troubles. He hath not so evidently yet taken up his residence, though he hath built him a house among us, we trust, with that intention, to dwell with us. This we are to sue and entreat for.

*Why art thou as one astonished?*] Why art thou looking on our miseries as an amazed stranger, as not concerned in our affairs or condition, and not caring what becomes of us; *as a traveller*, but passing through, and having no further interest or regard: or, *as a mighty man that can not save*, as Samson after his hair was cut, either as wearied or bound, or somewhat hindered, though strong enough.

Now, Lord, look not on. Own our sufferings, and bestir thyself. Make it appear that *thou faintest not, neither art weary*, nor that anything can stand before thee and be thy hinderance. Break through our sins, the greatest hinderance of all; let not these stop thy way, nor bind thy hands. For *thou art in the midst of us:* though we see thee not so in thy work as we desire, yet here we know thou art in thy special good-will and power, as thou art in our profession and homage done to thee as our king among us. That testifies thy presence. Thou canst not so hide thyself, but there are still some characters of thy presence. *And we are called by thy name, thy people.* If we perish, thy name being upon us, what becomes then of *it?* Therefore leave us not. Though thou strike us, yet stay with us, and we shall live in hope of favor and deliverance: if thou go not away, our cries and prayers, at least our miseries, will move thee.

These things make up our plea. We are a most unworthy people, yet, we are called by his name, are in covenant with him; so, his glory is interested. We must not let go this. And what advantage so great as to have our interest wrapped up in his? His glory and our safety are in one bottom, to sink and swim together; then, there is no hazard. Therefore keep close to his interest and his covenant, and beg his staying with us, and arising for us, and lay hold on him for this end. It is a pleasant violence; and were there many to use it toward him, our deliverance were not far off.

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## SERMON XXVII.

### CALAMITIES CAUTIOUSLY INTERPRETED.

### LUKE xiii. 1—9.

There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

And Jesus answering, said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?

I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Or, those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?

I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

He spake also this parable: A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

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Then said he unto the dresser of the vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none; cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?

And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it;

And if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

IT is no easy or common thing, to give God's ways a right construction. For the most part we either let them pass unobserved, or unframe our observations, looking those principles and passions of our own, which give things another shape or color than what is truly theirs. This was here the case. This sad accident should have been observed by them who heard it, and might have been spoken of by them to very good purpose; but our Savior knew well what they meant by reporting the story, and what thoughts they had of it and of themselves, and by his answer, it would seem, all was not right with them.

The fact here related, we have not any further account of in sacred history, nor anything that we can clearly and certainly call it in any human writer. It is commonly conceived to have been done at Jerusalem, where Pilate abode, and that his power was exercised and done upon the followers of that Judas of Galilee spoken of, Acts v. 37, being such as denied it to be lawful to give obedience to the Roman empire, or to offer sacrifice for the interest and good of it. When they, it is likely, were coming together to offer at Jerusalem, and to maintain and to spread their opinion, Pilate comes upon them, and, while they were at the solemnity, makes a sacrifice of them to that authority they refused to sacrifice for: whether justly or nor, we can not determine; our Savior does not; but if it was just, surely it was very tragical and severe, suitable to that character Philo gives of *his* disposition who acted it. [Ἀμείλικτον.] The straining of justice, commonly breaks it: a little of the other side, is, of the two, doubtless, the safer extreme.

However, this stroke and all others, as they come from the Supreme Hand, are righteous. Whatsoever be the temper or intent of the lower actor, and whatsoever be the nature of the action, as from him, the sovereign hand of God is in them, and chief in them. Amos iii. 6: *Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?* And yet all evils, as *he* doth them, are both good and well done. Actions, whether voluntary or casual, as these two here, yet do powerfully issue from the First Being and Worker, and as from him, are both unalterably certain and unquestionably just. Thus they who here report it seem to have judged of this passage, that it was a just punishment of sin. And our Savior contests not about that, but rather seems to agree to them so far, and draws that warning out of it: he only corrects the misconceit it seems they were in, in thrusting it too far off from themselves, and throwing it too heavy upon those who sacrificed.

*Think ye that they were sinners?*] Though it were an error to think that all temporal evils are intended of God as punishments of some particular guiltiness, and so to be taken as infallibly concluding against either persons or causes as evil, yet certainly the hand of God, either upon ourselves or others, is wisely to be considered, and it will very often be found a punishment pointing to the sin. And it is certainly an argument of very great stiffness and pride of heart, not to observe and acknowledge it, and a sure presage either of utter ruin, or, at least, of a heavier stroke. Any one who is set against the Lord, and will not be humbled, whether by what he sees on others, or what he feels on himself, shall find he hath an overmatch to deal with, that will either bow him or break him. Isa. xxvi. 11: *Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, but they shall see and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.*

*Think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt at Jerusalem?*] Our Savior goes not to search into the quarrel, and to condemn or justify either the one party or the other; that was not for his purpose. His aim was to rectify the mistake of those he spoke to, and to draw forth from their own relation what was most proper for their use. Much of our hearing and telling of news, hath little of this in it; and with most persons it doth not relish, to wind things that way. Some, even good persons, do accustom themselves, and take too much liberty, to an empty, fruitless way of entertainment in this kind. And if we make any remark, it commonly keeps abroad, comes not home to ourselves. Be it a judgment, be the persons great sinners in a sinful course, yet, they are not always the greatest of all because they suffer and others escape, as we readily think, and the Jews here concluded concerning these Galileans.

God is to be adored and reverenced, who useth his own freedom in this; he does injustice to none, yet chooses them on whom he will do exemplary justice, and whom he will let pass, and gives no account of this to any. Some less wicked have been ensamples to them who were much more wicked than they.

Do not flatter yourselves in the conceit of exception from some stroke which others in the same way with you have fallen under, or even from some course which others have run and smarted in, and bear yourselves big upon the name of *God's people*. But tremble before the Lord; and search your own hearts. And let us think, though we may not be guilty of such public scandalous evils as others fall into and are punished for, yet how full are we of secret malice, pride, and lusts, &c., and let us wonder at the patience of God to ourselves, while multitudes have been swept away round about us. Think you that they who have died by sword or pestilence of late, were greater sinners than we who are left

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behind? Oh, no! *but except we repent, we shall all likewise perish.* Enough of these arrows are still in God's arsenal, and though he use not these to us, yet remember, death, and judgment, and eternity, are before us, and they call for wise and speedy consideration and repentance.

Oh! you that go on in your transgressions after all that is come upon us, who were drunkards and swearers, and are so yet, what think you? Because the heat of public judgment is abated, is there no more fear? Have you made a covenant with hell and death, and gained quarter of them that they will not seize on you? Oh! that will never hold: they will not, they can not keep to you. And if you hold on your course when the day of visitation shall come, how much heavier shall it be by all this forbearance! You shall wish you had been cut off with the first. The day is at hand, when it shall be easier for them than for you. Only, the advantage is, that there is an exception yet sounding in your ears; *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

I beseech you, my brethren, enter into your own hearts, and be not always out of yourselves, and so out of your wits. Consider the Lord's ways and your own, and wonder at his goodness. Why am not I made an example to others, as well as so many have been made examples to me? Now let me fall down at his feet, and beg of him, that as he hath not made me an example of justice all this while, he may now make me an example of mercy and free grace to all that shall look on him.

Our Savior, to their reported instance adds another himself, which was, no doubt, late and recent with them, to the same purpose, and in the same strain: *Think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* Not just after the same particular manner, but the likeness is in *perishing*.—You shall as certainly perish as they are perished. And this, to many impenitent sinners, is verified in their being cut off, even by some temporal judgment, after long-abused forbearance, and often, very like those they have seen instances of, and would not be warned by. Thus, it was fulfilled to many of the Jews, in the death of many thousands of them, and the destruction of their city by the Romans, in which there was much likeness with the two explanatory judgments here mentioned. But the universal and far more dismal *perishing* of unrepenting sinners, is that death which lies unseen on the other side of that death we see and are so afraid to look on. Oh! saw we the other, this would appear nothing: it would be the only terrible of all terribles indeed. And how terrible soever, it is the unfailing attendant of impenitence. These God hath linked together, and no creature can sever them, continuance in sin and perishing, repentance and life. It is faith, indeed, that lays hold on our pardon and life in Christ, and by that we are justified and saved; yet, so as this is still true, so that the other nowise crosses it, that there is no life without repentance. And this wrongs not the gospel at all, to preach and profess repentance; yea, it is a prime point of preaching the gospel. And here we find the great preacher of the gospel, who is himself the great substance and subject of the gospel, this is his doctrine, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* There is no right preaching of the gospel, but the doctrine of repentance must be in it: the drawing and turning of the soul to God, from whom it is gone out by sin, this the gospel aims at. And there is no right preaching of repentance, without the gospel. The law indeed discovers sin, but that is not enough to work repentance: for that, there must be a door of hope opened to a sinner, at which he may come in, hoping to be pardoned and accepted upon returning and submitting. This the gospel alone does. And whensoever the prophets preached repentance, there was somewhat that always expressed or imported the notion of the gospel, God declaring himself reconciled, ready to forgive and receive him.

Now, not to speak of the nature of repentance, which here were pertinent, I shall only desire you to seek to know the nature of it, by feeling the power of it within you.* Oh! happy they that do! Were the sweetness of it known, we might persuade most by that; but that can not be known, till we be persuaded and brought to repentance,—the delight there is in those tears, the pleasure in crucifying sin, even the most pleasant sins. The soul, then in its right motion when turning toward God, finds itself moved sweetly; but it is thrown, and distorted, and disappointed in turning from him and following sinful lusts. But here, necessity is the argument, the highest necessity. If it may be necessary for you *not to perish*, then it is necessary for you to *repent*. Had any of you an ulcer, though painful to be lanced, yet, if told *it must be*, else you would die, that would make a man call for it and entreat it. Lord what is the madness of the minds of men! Do we believe that there is such a thing after all that is here, as *perishing* and *being saved*, eternal death and eternal life, and can we think on anything else, so as to forget these, or to be negligent and unresolved concerning them, and yet, eat and please the flesh, and seek to make other things sure, and leave these to their hazard? The God who made your hearts, persuade them! For who else can?

The parable that follows, teaches the same doctrine of repentance, and that upon the motive of *patience* and *forbearance*. *He spake also this parable: A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard.* Particulars

* *Malo sentire compunctionem quàm scire ejus definitionem.* I would rather *feel* compunction, than know its *definition*. [Thomas à Kempis.]

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should not be overstrained and squeezed for morality. The main is, God's dispensation, and his expectation in his orchard, the church.

Our Savior is much in this way of teaching. He calls in natural things to serve spiritual ends; and so all are fit to do, had we the faculty to exact it. A spiritual mind draws that which is symbolical with it, out of all. Such may fruitfully walk in gardens and orchards, and feed on the best, though they stir nothing. The great Lord is himself the planter of his vineyard; his own hand sets each tree. And the soil is fruitful, there is sap and moisture. This is to be understood of his visible church and ordinances; for the planting here signifies that. Christians are often compared to things living, growing and fruitful; as to the vine and fig-tree, Isa. v., &c. There is high engagement to be so, and real Christians are truly so.

*And he sought fruit thereon.*] Good reason had he so to do, having so planted it. Those trees which are left wild in the barren wilderness, no fruit is to be expected on them; at least, no garden-fruit, such as grows in the garden of God. Some natures have some kind of fruit, and some sweeter than others, but they are but wild figs. God's delight is to *come into his garden*, and there *eat his pleasant fruits*. Cant. iv. 16. Natural men may, after their fashion, be temperate, and patient, and charitable; but to believe on God, and love him above themselves, and from such principles to do all they do, this is not to be expected.

Now, all that are planted in the church of God, are, in name, such trees as should have their sap in them, that is, faith and love, and bear answerable fruits: they are called *trees of righteousness, and planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified*. Isa. lxi. 3. He himself knows who are indeed such, and knows that the rest can bear no such fruit; yet, in regard of outward dispensations and their own profession, he speaks after the manner of men; *he comes and seeks fruit*. Men who think they may live in the face of the church, and make use of her ordinances, and yet be as excusably barren of all the fruits of holiness, as if they grew upon a common heath, it is strange they should not conceive their own folly, and know that God reckons otherwise, and according to the ground that he hath set them in, and the manuring he bestows on them, looks for some suitable fruit.

But the most are thus. They consider not what they are; think it a kind of impertinent importunity, to press them to holiness, to meekness, to bearing wrongs, to heavenly-mindedness, to spiritual activity, and usefulness to others. Why, it is strange. What think ye, my brethren, are we Christians, or are we not? We have a name that we are active, and are dead. Congregations are filled with such; and when the Lord *comes and seeks fruit*, in the greatest part he finds none. If lies, oaths, and cursings, were the fruits, there are enough of these; But zeal for God, love to our brethren, self-denial, humility, if these be they, alas! where are they? So much preaching, sabbaths, fasts, and covenants; and where is fruit, *the fruits of the Spirit?* Oh! there are empty leaves, and some promising greenness, but the most belie the hope they give. And we of this land, who are engaged so high, what could have been done more for us? Though lying far north, yet have we much of the gospel sunshine, and are bound by our own promise, and covenant, and solemn oath to God, to be more fruitful. Yet this is still broke. Who that had seen our first meltings into tears, or fair buds of stirring zeal, could have imagined we should have been so barren?

*Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard.*] Now the conference with the vine-dresser about it, though that is much for the fulness of the parable, yet may imply God's imparting of his thoughts concerning his church to his faithful ministers. Such are included under that name here. For he blames not the vine-dresser as negligent, but complains of the barrenness of the tree. In the cutting down, there may be some pointing at church censure, but I conceive, it is rather to express God's purpose concerning the barren tree, than to give order or command about it. Doubtless, the Lord would have his vine-dressers sensible of the fruitlessness of his trees, though it be not by any notable neglect on their part.

*These three years.*] This expresses the great patience of God, that spares so long, and speaks not of *cutting down* at the very first. Thus, of long time hath he waited on many of us, many more years than to the strict number here named; on how many of us a great part of our lifetime! Whence is it that we are not afraid of this word here sounding, as it were, in our ears? *Cut it down: why troubles it the ground?* As if he should say, It takes up room, and does no good, yea, hinders and prejudices others, as all ungodly, fruitless persons in the church of God do.

The vine-dresser entreats and obtains one year more. This, the faithful laborers of God will not fail to do: to preaching to his people, they will join much prayer for them, that they may be made fruitful, and meantime, be spared and not perish in their unfruitfulness. They will double their endeavors in the sense of that danger; to all other pains will add this, the watering of them with tears. God is gracious, and easy to be entreated, and forbears yet, and waits. Oh! it is not too late. Any of you that at length are stirred up to any real desires of fruitfulness to him, I dare give you warrant to be confident, not only of his forbearing upon such a desire, but of his favorable acceptance of it as a good sign, yea, as already a beginning of fruit. Indeed, in case of people's remaining barren after all, the end will be to

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be *cut down*; and to every fruitless and godless person among you, it is not long to that day; it will be upon you before you are aware. As John preached, *The axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore, every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire.* Matt. iii. 10. God is taking his axe, as it were, and fetching his stroke at you, and you know not how soon it may light, and you be cut down, and cut off from all hopes for ever, never to see a day of grace more, nor hear a sermon more—cut down and cast into the fire to burn, and that never to end. Oh, for some soul to be rescued, were it even now! Oh! *To-day, to-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.*

Real Christians, though not altogether barren—that is impossible, yet, are not so plentifully fruitful; there is little of *the increase of God*, such as he may be invited to his garden for, such as the vine-dressers may rejoice in, yea, the Master himself. The Lord maketh a kind of boast of us, as men will do of trees in their gardens, that they have much fruit, though possibly a meaner appearance and show than most of the rest. Oh, what a joy and glory were it to our God, to have unobserved, obscure Christians abounding in sweet spiritual fruits, laden with fruit, and hanging down the head, stooping the lower, still the more humble for it; referring all to himself, living to him, doing all for him! But alas! we are empty vines, bringing forth fruit to ourselves, serving our own wills and humors, and barren to him. But for this end are we *planted in the house of God*, and ingrafted into the Son of God, that blessed, living Root, to be fruitful to his praise. It is his credit; *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples*, John xv. 8.

Now, for this are requisite, *1st*. Much prayer. For though here he speaks as an ordinary master, yet it is his secret influence which does all. Hos. xiv. 8: *From me is thy fruit found*, and prayer draws down that. *2dly*, Much faith in Christ, living to him, and drawing sap from him. Such as do all in his strength, and are much in application and attraction, shall be found the most abundant in all choice and sweet fruits; they who *abide in him*, that is, who, in the very actings of faith, any more in him than many others who yet are *in* him. But, alas! this is a thing of which men speak much, and know little.

## SERMON XXVIII.

(Preached before the Lord Commissioner and the Parliament, 14th November, 1669.)

### PRESENT DUTY.

JOHN xxi. 22.

——What is that to thee? Follow thou me.

OF all that ever lived on earth, the most blessed was this handful and small company our Lord chose for his constant attendants, to see his divine miracles, enjoy his sweetest company, and to hear his divine doctrine. What a holy flame of love must have burned in their hearts, who were always so near the Sun of Righteousness! It was indeed a sad hour, wherein that was eclipsed, and the Lord of life lay dead in the grave. And what a deluge of joy was in their hearts when he rose again! And what a transport was it when they saw him ascend, and a shining cloud kissing his feet, and parting him from them! In the interval, as he had risen himself, so, he is raising them from their unbelief. St. Peter, not content with a bare forsaking of his Lord, had also denied him. But he falls not a quarrelling, but speaks of love to him, and blows up these sparks of love with this threefold question, *Lovest thou me?* St. Peter answers fervently, but most modestly, whereupon his Lord gives him a service suitable to his love, *Feed my sheep*; for which none are qualified but they that love him. But when he grows bold to ask a question, he gets a grave check, and a holy command, *What is that to thee? Follow thou me.* This was a transient stumbling in one who, but lately recovered of a great disease, did not walk firmly. But it is the common track of most, to wear out their days with impertinent inquiries. There is a natural desire in men to know the things of others, and to neglect their own, and to be more concerned about things to come, than about things present. And this is the great subject of conversation. Even the weakest minds must descant upon all things; as if the weakest capacities could judge of the greatest matters, by a strange levelling of understandings, more absurd and irrational than that of fortunes! Most men are beside themselves, never at home, but always roving. It is true, a man may live in solitude to little purpose, as Domitian catching flies in his closet. Many noisome thoughts break in upon one when alone; so that when one converseth with himself, it had need be said, *Vide ut sit cum bono viro.* A man alone shall be in worse company than are in all the world, if he bring not into him better company than himself or all the world, which is, the fellowship of God and the Holy Spirit. Yet, the matters of the church seem to concern all, and so indeed they do: but every sober man must say, all truths are not alike clear, alike necessary, nor of alike concernment to every one. Christians should keep within their line. Whether it be the will of our great Master, that the order that hath been so long in the church continue in it, or not, *What is that to thee?* It is certainly a great error, to let our zeal run out from the excellent things of religion, to matters which have little or no connexion with them. A man, though he err, if he do it calmly and meekly, may be a better man than he who is stormy and furiously orthodox. Our business is to follow

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JESUS, and trace his life upon earth, and to wait his return in the clouds. Had I a strong voice, as it is the weakest alive, yea, could I lift it up as a trumpet, I would sound a retreat from our unnatural contentions and irreligious strivings for religion. Oh! what are the things we fight for, compared to the great things of God? There must be a great abatement of the inwards of religion, when it runs wholly to a scurf. God forbid any should think, that except all be according to our mind, we must break the bond of peace. If we have no kindness to our brethren, yet, let us have pity on our mother, and not tear her bowels. And, indeed, next to the grave and the silent shades of death, a cottage in some wilderness is to be wished for, to mourn for the pride and passion of mankind. How do the profane wretches take advantage from our breaches! But if there be such here, because of the weakness, folly, and passions of some men, is it folly to follow Jesus? Are some ridiculous, and for that, will you turn religion into ridicule? If you do, it will at least turn to a *Sardonic* laughter. Because we contend for a little, is the whole an invention? Will the pillars be brangled, because of the swarms of flies that are about them?

There is an Eternal Mind that made all things, that stretched out the heavens, and formed the spirit of man within him. Let us tremble before him, and love the Lord Jesus. Our souls have indelible characters of their own excellency in them, and deep apprehensions of another state, wherein we shall receive according to what we have done upon earth. Was not Jesus, the Son of God, declared to be such by his resurrection from the dead? Hath there not been received and transmitted to us, through all ages, many martyrs following him through racks and fires, and their own blood, to his glory? And shall we throw off all these? Better be the poorest, weakest, and most distempered person upon earth, with the true fear of God, than the greatest wit and highest mind in the world, if profane, or, though not such, if void of any just or deep sense of the fear of God. *For a living dog is better than a dead lion.* Some religious persons are perhaps weak persons, yet, in all ages, there have been greater nobles and more generous souls truly religious, than ever were in the whole tribe of atheists and libertines.

Let us, therefore, follow the holy Jesus. Our own concernments concern us not, compared to this. *What is that to thee?* may be said of all things beside this. All the world is one great impertinency to him who contemplates God and his Son Jesus. Great things, coaches, furniture, or houses, concern the outward pomp or state of the world, but not the necessities of life; neither can they give ease to him that is pinched with any one trouble. He that hath twenty houses, lies but in one at once; he that hath twenty dishes on his table, hath but one belly to fill. So it is, *ad supervacua sudatur.* All are uncertain; sudden storms fall on, and riches fly away as a bird to heaven, and leave those who look after them, sinking to hell in sorrow.

A Christian is solicitous about nothing. If he be raised higher, it is that he desires not: if he fall down again, he is where he was. A well-fixed mind, though the world should crack about him, shall be in quiet. But when we come to be stretched on our deathbed, things will have another visage. It will pull the rich from his treasure, strip the great of his robes and glory, and snatch the amorous gallant from his fair, beloved mistress, and from all we either have or grasp at. Only sin will stick fast and follow us. Those black troops will clap fatal arrests on us, and deliver us over to the jailer. Are these contrivances, or the dark dreams of melancholy? All the sublimities of holiness may be arrived at, by the deep and profound belief of these things. Let us, therefore, ask, "Have we walked thus, and dressed our souls by this pattern?"

But this hath a nearer aspect to pastors, who should be copies of the fair original, and second patterns who follow nearer Christ; they should be imitating him in humility, meekness, and contempt of the world, and particularly in affection to souls, feeding the flock of God. Should we spare labor, when he spared not his own blood? How precious must the sheep be, who were bought at so high a rate as the blood of God! Oh, for more of this Divine and evangelic heat, instead of our distempered heat. This is the substance of religion, to imitate him whom we worship. Can there be a higher or nobler design in the world, than to be Godlike, and like Jesus Christ? He became like us, that we might be more like him. He took our nature upon him, that he might transfuse his into us. His life was a track of doing good, and suffering ill. He spent the days in preaching and healing, and often the nights in prayers. He was *holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners.* How, then, can heirs of wrath follow the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world? Humility, meekness, and charity, were the darling virtues of Christ. He came to expiate and to extirpate our pride; and when that Majesty did so humble himself, shall a worm swell? No grace can be where the mind is so swelled with this airy humor. He was meek, and reviled not again; nor did he vent his anger, though he met with the greatest injuries. The rack of his cross could make him confess no anger against those who were draining him of his life and blood: all he did was to pray for them. Charity was so dear to him, that he recommended it as the characteristic by which all might know his disciples, *if they loved one another.* But alas! by this may all know we are not his disciples, because we hate one another. But that we

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may imitate him in his life, we must run the back-trade, and begin with his death, and must die without him. Love is a death. He that loves, is gone and lost in God, and can esteem or take pleasure in nothing beside him. When the bitter cup of the Father's wrath was presented to our Lord, one drop of this elixir of love and union to the Father's will, sweetened it so, that he drank it over without more complaining. This death of Jesus mystically acted in us, must strike down all things else, and he must become our all. Oh, that we would resolve to live to him that died, and to be only his, and humbly to follow the crucified Jesus! All else will be quickly gone. How soon will the shadows that now amuse us, and please us, fly away!

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## SERMON XXIX.

### LOVE THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW.

MATTHEW xxii. 37, 39.

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.

THE wisdom and meekness of our Savior is the more remarkable, and shines the brighter, by the malice of his adversaries; and their cavils and tempting questions occasion our benefit and instruction. Thus was it here.

We see, the words are the sum of the whole law, and they are taken out of the book of the law. They are called *two commandments:* the former is the sum of the first; the latter, of the second table. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God. That is,* says our Savior, *the first and great commandment.* Our first obligation is to God, and then, through him and for his sake, to men.

*The second is like unto it.*] Seems it not rather contrary than like to the former?—Whereas in the former, the whole stream of love is directed in one undivided current toward God, this other commandment seems to cut out a new channel for it, and to turn a great part of it to men: *Thy neighbor as thyself.* No, they are not contrary, if we take them right; yea, they do not only agree, but are inseparable. They do not divide our love, but they set it in its right course; first, wholly to God, as the sovereign good, and only for himself worthy to be loved; and then, back from him, it is, according to his own will, derived downward to our neighbor. For then only we love both ourselves and others aright, when we make our love to him the reason and the rule of both.* So, then, our love is not to be immediately divided between him and our neighbor, or any creature, but is first, all to be bestowed on him, and then he diffuses, by way of reflection, so much of it upon others as he thinks fit. Being all in his hands, it is at his disposal; and that which he disposes elsewhere (as here, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*), it is not taken off from him, but abiding still in him, as in its natural place (as light doth in the sun), flows forth from him by such an emanation as divides it not; as beams flow forth from the sun and enlighten the air, and yet, are not cut off from it.

So, then, the second is like unto the first, because it springs from it, and depends on it. It commands the same affection; love, in the former, placed on God, and in this, extended from him to our neighbor. And it is like unto it in this too; that, as the former is the sum of the first table, and so, the first and great commandment, so this is the sum of the second table, and therefore next unto it in greatness and importance.

All the precepts that can be found in the law and the prophets, are reducible to these, and all obedience depends upon this love. 1. Consider this, how these are the sum of this law. 2. Consider them particularly in themselves.

Not only because it is love that facilitates all obedience, and is the true principle of it, that makes it both easy to us, and acceptable to God: but beside this, that love disposes the soul for all kinds of obedience, this very act of love is in effect all that is commanded in the law. For the first, laid to the first table, it is so much one with the first commandment, that it expresses most fitly the positive of it, opposite to that which is there forbidden: *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*—but shalt have me alone for thy God, or bestow all Divine affection, and all worship that is the sign and expression of it, upon me only. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,* and, if thou lovest me alone, thou wilt not decline to any kind of false worship. That were to vitiate thy affection, and to break that conjugal love and fidelity to which thou art bound by covenant, being my people as by a spiritual marriage. Therefore is idolatry so frequently called, in the phrase of the prophets, *adultery* and *uncleanness.*

And, in the letter of that second commandment, the Lord uses that word which in its usual sense is conjugal, and relates to marriage, *I am a jealous God;* and, in the close of that precept, expresseth particularly this affection of love, as particularly interested in it, though extended to all the rest, *I show mercy to thousands of them that love me.*

Is it not a genuine property of love, to honor and respect the name of those whom we love? And therefore it is altogether inconsistent with the love of God, to vilify and abuse his name.

They that understand the true use of that holy rest of the sabbath day, do know that it frees the soul, and makes it vacant from

* Minus enim tè amat, qui aliquid præter te amat, et non propter te. Incipiat homo amare Deum, et non amabit in homine nisi Deum.—AUGUSTINE.

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earthly things for this purpose, that it may fully apply itself to the worship and contemplation of God, and converse with him at greater length. Then, certainly, where there is this entire love to God, this will not weigh heavy, will be no grievous task fo it: it will embrace and gladly obey this fourth commandment, not only as its duty, but as its great delight. For there is nothing that love rejoices in more, than in the converse and society of those on whom it is placed: it would willingly bestow most of its time that way, and thinks all hours too short that are spent in that society. Therefore not only they who profanely break, but they who keep it heavily and wearily, who find it rather a burden than a delight, may justly suspect that the love of God is not in them; but he that keeps his day cheerfully, and loves it, because on it he may more liberally solace and refresh himself in God, may safely take it as an evidence of his love to God.

Now, that, after the same manner, the love of our neighbor is the sum of the second table, the Apostle St. Paul proves it for us clearly and briefly, Rom. xiii. 9, 10. All the commandments touching our neighbor, are for the guarding of him from evil and injury. Now, *Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.* He that truly loves his neighbor as himself, will be as loath to wrong him, as to wrong himself, either in that honor and respect that is due to him, or in his life, or chastity, or goods, or good name, or to lodge so much as an unjust desire or thought, because that is the beginning and conception of real injury. In a word, the great disorder and crookedness of the corrupt heart of man, consists in self-love: it is the very root of all sin both against God and man, for no man commits any offence, but it is in some way to profit or please himself. It was a high enormity of self-love that brought forth the very first sin of mankind. That was the bait which took more than either the color or the taste of the apple, that it was desirable for knowledge; it was in that, that the main strength of the temptation lay, *Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.* And was it not deep self-love to affect that? And it is still thus: though we feel the miserable fruits of that tree, the same self-love possesses us still; so that, to please our own humors and lusts, our pride, or covetousness, or voluptuousness, we break the law of God, the law of piety, and of equity and charity to men. Therefore the apostle, foretelling the iniquities and impieties of the last times, *that men should be covetous, boasters,* &c., and *lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God*—sets that on the front, as the chief, leading evil, and the source of all the rest—*lovers of their ownselves: Men shall be lovers of themselves,* therefore, *covetous;* and *lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God,* because *lovers of their ownselves.* 2 Tim. iii. 2. Therefore, this is the sum of that which God requires in his holy law, the reforming of our love, which is the commanding passion of the soul, and wheels all the rest about with it in good or evil.

And its reformation consists in this, in recalling it from ourselves unto God, and reflecting it from God to our brethren. Loving ourselves sovereignly by corrupt nature, we are enemies to God, and haters of him, and can not love our neighbers but only in reference to ourselves, and so far as it profits or pleaseth us to do so, and not in order and respect unto God. The highest and the true redress of this disorder, is that which we have here in these two precepts as the substance of all: first, that all our love ascend to God, and then, that what is due to men descend thence, and so, passing that way, it is purified and refined, and is subordinated and conformed to our love of him above all, which is *the first and great commandment.*

Here we have the supreme object of love to whom it is due—*The Lord thy God,* and the measure of it, which is indeed to know no measure*—*With all thy heart, all thy soul, and all thy mind.* For which, in Deut. vi. 5, we have *all thy strength.* Luke hath both. The difference is none, for all mean that the soul, and all the powers of it, should unite and combine themselves in their most intense and highest strength, to the love of God, and that all the workings of the soul and actions of the whole man, be no other than the acting and exercise of this love.

He accounts not nor accepts of anything we can offer him, if we give not the heart with it; and he will have none of that neither, unless he have it all. And it is a poor all, when we have given it, for the great God to accept of. If one of us had the affection of a hundred, yea, of all the men in the world, yet could he not love God in a measure answerable to his full worth and goodness. All the glorified spirits, angels, and men, that are or shall be, in their perfections, loving him with the utmost extent of their souls, do not altogether make up so much love as he deserves. Yet he is pleased to require our heart, and the love we have to bestow on him; and though it is infinitely due of debt, yet he will take it as a gift: *My son, give me thy heart.* Prov. xxiii. 26.

Therefore, the soul that begins to offer itself to him, although overwhelmed with the sense of its own unworthiness and the meanness of its love, yet may say, Lord, I am ashamed of this gift I bring thee, yet, because thou callest for it, such as it is, here it is; the heart and all the love I have, I offer unto thee, and had I ten thousand times more, it should all be thine. As much as I can, I love thee, and I desire to be able to love thee more. Although I am unworthy to be admitted to love, yet, thou art most worthy to be loved by me, and besides, thou dost

* Modus est nescire modum, subtiliùs ista distinguere facile est magis quàm solidum.



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allow, yea, commandest me to love thee. My loving of thee adds nothing to thee, but it makes me happy; and though it be true, the love and the heart I offer thee, is infinitely too little for thee, yet there is nothing, besides thee, enough for it.

*The Lord*, or *Jehovah, thy God.*] There lie the two great reasons of love, τὸ ἀγαπητον and τὸ ἰδιον—*Jehovah*, the Spring of being and goodness, infinitely lovely; all the beauty and excellencies of the creatures, are but a drop of that ocean:—and, *Thy God*, to all of us the Author of our life, and of all that we enjoy; who spread forth those heavens that roll about us and comfort us with their light, and motions, and influences, and established this earth that sustains us; who furnisheth us with food and raiment, and in a word (and it is the apostle's, Acts xvii. 25), who *gives us*, ζωὴν καὶ πνοὴν καὶ τὰ πάντα, *life, and breath, and all things*; and, to the believer, *his* God in a nearer propriety, by redemption and peculiar covenant. But our misery is, the most of us do not study and consider him, what he is in himself and what to us; and therefore we do not love him, because we know him not.

*And thy neighbor as thyself.*] If we will not confess and suspect ourselves, how much we are wanting in the former, yet our manifest defect in this latter will discover it. Therefore, the apostle, Rom. xiii. 10, speaks of this as all, because, though inferior to the other, yet connected with it, and the surest sign of it. For these live and die together. The apostle St. John is express in it, and gives those hypocrites the lie plainly: *If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.* 1 John iv. 20. We have no real way of expressing our love to God, but in our converse with men and in the works of love toward them.

Certainly, that sweet affection of love to God, can not consist with malice and bitterness of spirit against our brethren. No, it sweetens and calms the soul, and makes it all love every way.

*As thyself.*] As truly both wishing and, to thy power, procuring his good, as thy own. Consider how much unwilling thou art to be injured or defamed, and have the same thoughts for thy brother; be as tender for him. But how few of us aspire to this degree of charity!

Thy very enemies are not here excluded. If self-love be still predominant in thee, instead of the love of God, then thou wilt make thine own interest the rule of thy love; so when thou art, or conceivest thou art, wronged by any one, the reason of thy love ceaseth. But if thou love for God, that reason abides still.* God hath commanded me to love my enemies, and he gives me his example; he does good to the wicked who offend him.

And this is indeed a trial of our love to God. One hath marred thee; that gives thee to think that thou hast no cause to love him for thyself; be it so, self-love forbids thee, but the love of God commands thee to love him. God says, If thou lovest me, love him for my sake. And if thy love to God be sincere, thou wilt be glad of the occasion to give so good a testimony of it, and find a pleasure in that which others account so difficult and painful

* Amicus diligendus in Deo, et inimicus propter Deum. [Augustine.]

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## SERMON XXX.

### THE LAW WRITTEN UPON THE HEART.

HEBREWS viii. 10.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.

The two great evils that perplex sensible minds, are, the guiltiness of sin, and the power of it. Therefore, this new covenant hath in it two promises opposite to these two evils; free pardon to remove the guilt of sin, and the subduing of its power by the law of God written in the heart. Of this latter only for the present. Having spoken somewhat of the sense of the law in the ten commandments, and of the sum of it in two, this remains to be considered as altogether necessary for obedience, and without which, all hearing and speaking, and all the knowledge of it, will be fruitless. Though it be made very clear and legible without, we shall only read it, and not at all keep it, unless it be likewise written within.

Observe, in the first place, the agreement of the law with the gospel. The gospel bears the complete fulfilling of the law, and the satisfying of its highest exactness, in our surety Jesus Christ, so that, in that way, nothing is abated; but besides, in reference to ourselves, though it take off the rigor of it from us, because answered by another for us, yet it doth not abolish the rule of the law, but *establisheth* it, Rom. iii. 31. It is so far from tearing or blotting out the outward copies of it, that it writes it anew, where it was not before, even *within*, sets it upon the heart in sure and deep characters. We see this kind of writing of the law, is a promise for the days of the gospel cited out of the prophet Jeremiah, ch. xxxi. 33.

There is indeed no such writing of the law in us, or keeping of it by us, as will hold good for our justification in the sight of God; therefore, that other promise runs combined with it, the free forgiveness of iniquity. But again, there is no such forgiveness as sets a man free to licentiousness and contempt of God's law, but, on the contrary, binds him more strongly to obedience; therefore, to that sweet promise of the pardon of sin, is inseparably joined this other of the inward writing

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of the law. The heart is not washed from the guiltiness of sin in the blood of Christ, that it may wallow and defile itself again in the same puddle, but it is therefore washed, that the tables or leaves of it may be clean, for receiving the pure characters of that law of God which is to be written on it.

Concerning this writing, there are three things you may mark: 1. What it is. 2. What is its necessity. 3. Who is its writer.

1. What it is. The writing of the law in the heart, is briefly no other than the renewing and sanctifying of the heart by the infusion of grace, which is a heavenly light that gives the soul to know God aright. And that is added here, as the same with the writing of the law in the heart, and an illustration of it, *They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.* And this light bringeth heat with it.* That right knowledge of God being in the soul, begets in it love to him, and love is the same with the fulfilling of the whole law. It takes up the whole soul: *I will put it in their mind, and write it in their hearts.* If we will distinguish these, then it is, that they shall both *know* it and *love* it. It shall not be written anew in their heads, and go no deeper, but be written in their hearts. But we may well take both expressions for the whole soul; for this kind of knowledge and love are inseparable, and where the one is, the other can not be wanting.

So, then, a supernatural, sanctified knowledge of God, is the law of God, written in the heart. When it comes and entertains him as holy within it, then it hath not a dead letter of the law written in it, but νόμον ἔμψυχον, the Lawgiver himself: his name and will are engraven on it throughout, on every part of it. All that they know of God shall not be by mere report, and by the voice of others, but they shall inwardly read and know him within themselves. Which (by-the-by) makes not the public teaching and work of the ministry superfluous to any, even to those who know most of God, but signifies only this: that all they that do indeed receive and believe the gospel, are inwardly enlightened by the Spirit of God to understand the things of God, and have not their knowledge on bare trust of others who instruct them, without any particular persuasion and light within, but what they hear of spiritual things, they shall understand and know after a spiritual manner. And the universality of the promise signifies, that this kind of knowledge should be more frequently and more largely bestowed in the days of the gospel, than it was before.

2. The necessity of writing the law on the heart. Although there be in the natural conscience of man, some dim characters of the law, convincing him of grosser wickednesses, and leaving him inexcusable, of which the apostle speaks, Rom. ii. 15; yet, he is so far, naturally, from the right knowledge of God and the love of his whole law, that, instead of that knowledge, his mind is full of darkness, and, contrary to that love, his heart is possessed with a natural enmity and antipathy against the law of God. Eph. iv. 18; Rom. viii. 7. There is a law within him directly opposite, which the apostle calls the *law of sin*, Rom. vii. 23; sin ruling and commanding the heart and whole man, making laws at its pleasure,* and obtaining full obedience. Therefore, of necessity, before a man can be brought to obey the holy law of God, the inward frame of his heart must be changed, the corrupt law of sin must be abrogated, and the soul must renounce obedience to it, and give itself up wholly [εἰς τύπον], to receive the stamp and impression of the law of God; and then, having it written within upon his heart, his actions will bear the resemblance, and be conformable unto it.

In this promise which God makes to his people, he hath regard to the nature of that obedience which he requires. Because he will have it sincere and cordial, therefore he puts a living principle of it within, writes his law in the heart, and then it is, in the words and actions, derived thence, and is more in the heart than in them. The first copy is in the heart, and all the other powers and parts of a man follow that, and so, by that means, as it is sincere, so it is universal. The heart is that which commands all the rest; and, as the vital spirits flow from it to the whole body, thus, the law of God, being written in it, is diffused through the whole man. It might be in the memory, or in the tongue, and not in the rest; but put it in the heart, and then it is undoubtedly in all.

Its being written in the heart, makes the obedience likewise universal in the object, as they speak, in respect to the whole law of God. When it is written only without a man, he may read one part and pass over another, may possibly choose to conform to some part of the law, and leave the rest; but when the full copy of it is written in his heart, then it is all one law. And as in itself it is inseparable, as St. James teacheth us, James ii. 10, so it is likewise in his esteem and affection and endeavor of obedience: he hath regard unto all the commandments as one. Because of his love to the law of God, *he hates*, not only some, but *every false way*, as David speaks, Psalm cxix. 104. He that looks on the law without him, will possibly forbear to break it while others look upon him; his obedience lies much in the beholder's eye; but he that hath the law written within, can not choose but regard it as much in secret as in public. Although his sin might be hid from the knowledge and censure of men, yet still it were violence done to that pure law that is within his breast, and therefore he hates it alike as if it were public. This is the constant enemy of all sin, this law

* Lux est vehiculum caloris.

* Tolerabis iniquas interiùs leges.

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within him. Psalm cxix. 11: *I have hid thy law in my heart*, says David, *that I might not sin against thee.* It makes a man abate nothing of his course of obedience and holiness because unseen, but like the sun that keeps on its motion when it is clouded from our eyes, as well as when we see it.

In a word, this writing of the law in the heart, makes obedience a natural motion, I mean, by a new nature: it springs not from outward constraints and respects, but from an inward principle, and therefore, not only is it universal and constant, but cheerful and easy. The law, only written in tables of stone, is hard and grievous; but make once the heart the table of it, and then there is nothing more pleasing. This law of God makes service delightful, even the painfullest of it. Psalm xl. 8: *I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart.* The sun which moves with such wonderful swiftness, that to the ignorant it would seem incredible to hear how many thousands of miles it goes each hour, yet because it is naturally fitted for that course, it comes, as the psalmist speaks, *like a bridegroom forth of his chamber, and rejoices, as a strong man, to run a race.* Psalm xix. 5. If the natural man be convinced of the goodness and equity of the law of God, yet, because it is not written within, but only commands without, it is a violent motion to him to obey it, and therefore he finds it a painful yoke. But here David, in whose heart it was, speaks of it: how often doth he call it his *delight* and his *joy!*

If any profane persons object to a godly man his exact life, that it is too precise, as if he wrote each action before he did it, he may answer, as Demosthenes did to him that objected he wrote his orations before he spake them, that he was not at all ashamed of that, although they were not only written, but engraven beforehand. Certainly, the godly man lives by this law which is written and engraved on his heart, and he needs not be ashamed of it.

It is true, the renewed man, even he that hath this law deepest written in his heart, yet, while he lives here, is still molested with that inbred Antinomian, that law of sin that yet dwells in his flesh: though the force and power of it is broken, and its law repealed in his conversion, and this new pure law placed in its stead, yet because that part which is flesh in him, still entertains and harbors it there, it creates and breeds a Christian daily vexation. Because sin hath lost dominion, it is still practising rebellion against that spiritual kingdom and law that is established in the regenerate mind: as a man that hath once been in possession of rule, though usurped, yet, being subdued, he is still *working* in that kingdom to turbulent practices. But though by this (as the apostle was, Rom. vii. 4) every godly man is often driven to sad perplexities and complaints, yet in this in his comfort; that law of his God written here, hath his heart and affection. Sin is dethroned and thrust out of his heart, and hath only a usurped abode within him against his will He sides with the law of God, and fights with all his power for it against the other. That holy law is his delight, and this law of sin his greatest grief.

3. The writer: *I will write.* The Lord promises himself to do this, and it is indeed his prerogative. He wrote it at first on tables of stone, and this spiritual engraving of it on the heart, is much more peculiarly his. Other men might afterward engrave it on stone, but no man can at all write it on the heart, not upon his own, much less upon another's. Upon his own he can not, for it is naturally taken up and possessed with that contrary law of sin (as we said before), and is willingly subject to it, loves that law, and therefore, in that posture, it neither can nor will work this change upon itself to dispossess that law which it loves, and bring in that which it hates. No man can write this law on the heart of another, for it is inaccessible: his hand can not reach it, he can not come at it; how then shall he write anything on it? Men, in the ministry of the word, can but stand and call without: they can not speak to within, far less, write anything within. Though they speak never so excellently and spiritually, and express nothing but what is written on their own hearts (and certainly, that is the most powerful way of speaking, and the likeliest for making an impression on the heart of another), yet, unless the hand of God's own Spirit carry it into the hearer's heart, and set on the stamp of it there, it will perish as a sound in the air, and effect nothing.* Let this ever be acknowledged to his glory. The voice of men may beat the ear, but only he who made the heart, can work upon it, and change and mould it as it pleaseth him. This is his own promise, and he alone makes it good. He writes his law on the hearts of his children, and by this work of his grace prepares them for glory. They who have this law written in their hearts, their names are certainly written in the book of life.

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## SERMON XXXI.

### GOD'S END AND DESIGN IN AFFLICTION.

HOSEA v. 15.

**I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.**

THERE is nothing we more hardly learn, and whereof we have more need to be taught, than to judge aright concerning our own deal-

* Sonus verborum nostrorum aures percutit, magister intus. Nolite putare quenquam hominem aliquid discere ab alio homine: admonere possumus per strepitum vocis nostræ, si non est intus qui doceat inanis strepitus est noster. [AUGUSTINE.]

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ing with God, and God's dealing with us; to know and acknowledge the perverseness and folly of our own ways, and the wisdom and goodness of his ways. Therefore, the sermons of the prophets insist much on this, to convince the people of God, to whom they were sent, of both these; and by this to persuade them to repentance. This is evidently here the prophet's aim. The whole chapter, with the following, contains a pathetic remonstrance of God's just quarrel with his people, aggravated by much long-suffering and lenity, and many warnings, verbal and real, on his part, and much stubbornness, impenitence, and multiplied provocation on theirs; he using all means to reclaim and save them, and they using all means to despise him and ruin themselves. The plea is against both the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

In these words we have the Lord, after much reasoning and trial of milder ways, which prevailed not with them, concluding upon a severe course, as being found necessary, and such as would be more effectual for their conversion. The words contain these three things: I. The procuring cause of God's afflicting his people. II. His way of afflicting them. III. The end of it.

I. The procuring cause is made up of these two, sin and impenitence. *I will go till they acknowledge their offences.* So that, if they had not committed those provoking sins, or, having committed them, had humbly acknowledged or repented of them, this labor of afflicting them had been saved; but these sins once committed and often repeated, and their being not so much as once acknowledged, and all this by God's own peculiar people, can not but draw on heavy afflictions.

1*st*. We may see how unwilling God is to afflict his people. Judgments are termed *his strange work*, but mercy is his darling attribute. When God exercises punitive acts against his people, the Scripture represents, as it were, a kind of reluctance and struggling in his bowels. Hos. xi. 8. *How shall I smite thee, O Ephraim? and how shall I give thee up, O Manasseh? My repentings are begun already.* He delights in their prosperity, and hath given them a rule, by which, if they walk, peace shall be upon them. He hath made them laws, the observance of which will bring heaps of blessings upon them; as we find what a multitude of favors attended it, Levit. xxvi. 4–12. *I will give you rain in due season;* and a little after, *I will give you peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid. I will walk among you, I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.* So, also, Deut. xxvii. 1–12. But those laws not being observed, then it is said, ver. 24, &c., *The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust; the Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies*, &c. But what is all that when opposed to the affliction here threatened, of God's withdrawing himself? *I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence.* He will not leave them, unless they drive him away; yea, and he is even then loath to leave them, and grieved that they are such enemies to themselves, and will not be persuaded to be better advised.

2*dly*. We see where the true blame of the many sufferings and miseries of the church is to be found. The abounding of sin, and the want of repentance, these make her troubles to abound. If God's own people would take his counsel, it would be well for them; either his first counsel of *obedience*, or his after counsel of *repentance*. When they are running from him, he calls after them *Return, return, O backsliding Israel, why will ye die? Thou hast destroyed thyself;* says the Lord by the same prophet, *but in me is thy help to be found.* Hos. xiii. 9. His counsel and ways would be peace, but their afflictions and sharp punishments are the fruit of their own ways; bitter fruit and wormwood, a root of bitterness. Prov. v. 4; Jer. ii. 19. Doth not the preaching of the word, and particularly the doctrine of repentance, sufficiently witness for God, and against his people, when their rebellion brings calamities upon them? The often-repeated warnings and entreaties, even to those who have often slighted and despised them, show how unwillingly he afflicts us. He does not surprise them, without warnings multiplied one upon another. Before he would proceed to treat them as enemies, to hew and slay them with the sword, he uses his messengers of peace to deal first with the word, sharply indeed, but graciously;—that sword of the Spirit which kills to make alive, to spare, if it might be, the destroying sword of the enemy. *I have hewn them by my prophets* (Hos. vi. 5), and if that would have served their turn, the other hewing and slaying should not have followed. A wise enemy who is resolved to be avenged, conceals his rage till it be accomplished, and does not threaten before he strikes, but makes the execution of his purpose the first revealing of it. Therefore, we may know that God, who doth all things most wisely, intends favor in threatening; denounces indignation that he may be interrupted. Not to inflict it, that is his desire. He would gladly have us stay his hand. An humble penitent acknowledgment will do it. "*Miniatur ne cædat, cædit ne occidat,*" says Chrysostom. *He threatens that he may not strike, and strikes that he may not destroy.* If speaking either mildly or sharply, will prevail with his children, he will not stir the rod to them: and when the rod is in his hand, if showing or shaking it will serve the turn, he will not strike with it. But this is our folly that usually we abuse all this goodness, and will not part with our sins, till we smart for them, and be beaten from them. We pull punishment out of God's hand; as Solomon says, *The fool's mouth calleth for strokes.* Prov. xviii. 6. When these indulgent ways that the Lord uses, avail nothing, then as a

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physician wearied in striving with lenitives and gentle medicines in a fixed, stubborn disease that yields not to them, it is no wonder that he betake himself to sharper remedies, and cut and burn, if need be, that he may cure. The Lord's complaint, in the beginning of the viith chapter of this prophecy, sounds this way, *When I would have healed Ephraim.* If it be thus, then, with the church of God, that it is often found guilty of great sins, and withal, great insensibleness and impenitence, it is no wonder that it is often found under great and many afflictions. There being in the church, in such societies as profess God's name, peculiar sins, such as are found nowhere else, by reason of God's peculiar covenant with them, and ordinances among them; *viz.*, contempt of the ordinances, and breach of the covenant; and by the same reason too, peculiar aggravations of the common sins, and ingredients of such things as make the same sins that other people commit, to be of a deeper die among God's people; their special relation to him, and the special means and mercies they receive from him, by which they they are both more instructed and more obliged to obedience; these things make the disobedience more heinous in itself, and more offensive to God. He can not but take it very ill to be disregarded by his own Και ου τουτον.—Thus the Lord makes a great and loud complaint that all may hear, Isa. i. 2; calls heaven and earth to hear it, that he had *nourished and brought up children, and they had rebelled against him.* What do we deserve for our sins? Do not our oaths and cursing, our pride and deceit, our wonderful ignorance and profaneness, our formality, hypocrisy, and, above all, our deep security, threaten us with some heavy judgment? Which can not be avoided but by godly sorrow and earnest prayer, by the most humble way of acknowledgment and real amendment. This is our work this day; and unless we set about it for ourselves, and pray for it to the whole kingdom, we know not what we are doing. We can not do anything to purpose on behalf of the church of God, nor be fit supplicants for its deliverance, while we return ungodly ourselves.

II. God's way of afflicting his people: *I will go and return to my place.* The way that he will afflict them, is indeed the heaviest, as conveyed in this expression; as if he should say, I will withdraw myself from them, and will not appear to them at all for a time, yea, a long time. Well may it be rendered by *affliction* in the other clause, for they shall be truly so when the Lord is gone from them. Upon the withdrawing of his gracious presence, as necessarily follows affliction, as mist upon the setting of the sun. This was heavier than all his corrections. So long as they could but hear and see him among them, although it were chiding, yea, *scourging* them, yet, still there was this comfort, that they might speak to him as being near them, and so, considering his merciful nature, might have hope, by their complaints and cries in his presence, to move him to compassionate and spare them, and be reconciled. But when he was out of sight and quite gone from them, and so could neither hear nor see them in their misery, this was indeed the chief misery, worse than all that they could suffer in other punishments. In the preceding verses, he threatens to be *as a moth* to them, consuming them, though more slowly and insensibly; which was by lesser judgments that befell these kingdoms, as the history of them shows: then, *as a lion*, devouring more suddenly: but the gradation rises to the highest in this last, though to an ignorant creature it sounds least: *I will return to my place.* I will retire my favorable presence from them, and shut up all the influences and evidences of my grace. Which, in a public national sense (as here it is to be taken), imports not only longer and more grievous troubles than any which before had befallen them (as indeed they were), but God's leaving of them in those troubles, and not giving as before, any sign of his merciful presence. As if God should say, I will give them up to those miseries that are to come upon them, and leave them to themselves and to their cruel enemies, and will take no notice of them, until they know what a grievous thing the want of my presence is, and how hateful their sins are, that have deprived them of it, and so be stirred up to seek my face;—they would not regard me, either in my word or in my works, whether of mercy or of judgment, so long as I stayed with them, was present among them:—that so I may teach them to know what is the good of my presence, by the evil of my absence, which is a heavier judgment than all I have yet inflicted on them.

And as it is thus in relation to the public condition of the church, so is it, in a personal and more spiritual sense, to a child of God. No evil he fears so much, or feels so heavy, as God's absenting and withdrawing himself in displeasure; nor is there any good that he will admit to be compared with the light of God's countenance. Let others seek any good, let them have any good they can, but, says David, for himself and all the godly, the good we seek is this and no other, *Lord, lift upon us the light of thy countenance.* Psalm iv. 6. He can hear of any distress with courage and resolution, but this he can not endure to hear of, but deprecates it, Hide not thy face from thy servant. A godly man may, in the most prosperous condition, have much concern if the face of God be hid from him. That is his great affliction, as it is here called. There needs nothing else to damp all his prosperity. *Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.* Psalm xxx. 7. Even in prosperity, riches and power, and other such poor things, do not answer the desires of a soul acquainted with God: all these are

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nothing without his favor shining on them: no, nor the graces which are within them, which are far more precious than all outward things. The displeased withdrawing of God's countenance, makes a sad night amid all these; as when the sun is absent, it is night still, notwithstanding all the stars. Although God lay outward affliction on them, yet, if he enlighten them, though in a dungeon, they can rejoice. Yea, when they are inwardly troubled for sin, and God is rebuking them that way, yet, that is not so bad as when he leaves them and *returns to his place*. This is more grievous than when he chides and rebukes them, which he may do, and yet, *not in hot displeasure*, as David teaches us to distinguish it, Psalm vi. 1. It is a more comfortable condition, that he stay with them, and that he reprove them when they sin (yea, that is a mercy), than that he leave them, and speak not to them, nor suffer them to speak to him. They would then desire rather to find him present though correcting; for then, by speaking to him, they may express their repentance and requests to him for pardon. They would say to God, *Strike me, but hear me*, rather than be struck out from all intercourse with him, and he hold them as his enemies. And thus God may sometimes deal with his own, and particularly for some notable offence, until they be duly humbled and brought to a lowly acknowledgment, and so, to seek his face again; to see if they will be loath to grieve him again.

Though we all profess to know God, yet, the greatest part of us are so far from duly esteeming him, that we do not at all know what the spiritual, gracious presence of God is; how sweet the enjoyment, and how bitter and sad the deprivement. Oh, be desirous to understand and know this highest good, and, above all things, seek to enjoy it! And without doubt, the experience of it will persuade you to prize it and entertain it carefully; never willingly to grieve and drive away so great and so good a guest, who brings true happiness along with him to those with whom he dwells. There is solid peace, and there only, where he is. And for the church of God, what other thing can we, yea, what need we desire but this, as the assured help of all her distresses and sorrows, that God would return his gracious presence to her again? Then shall her enemies be turned backward, and she shall sing and rejoice in the God of her salvation. You see, this is the church's own prayer, Psalm lxxx. 3; she desires no more than this, *Cause thy face to shine; and we shall be safe*. That is the only sun which chases away the mist of her griefs and troubles. So then, the ending of these confusions we are lying and laboring under, is wrapped up in this; that the presence of our God be both entreated and obtained. This would make a sweet union of hearts, and make all attempts prosperous, and strike a terror into the church's enemies. But if their *Rock* forsake them, they were never so surely supported with other advantages, yet shall they sink and fall. If he *go to his place*, and shut up his power and wisdom from their help, and leave them with themselves, this shall suffice to undo them, without any enemy. It was sad news, not only to Moses, but to the whole people, Exod. xxxiii. 3; notwithstanding they were bent to provoke him to do so, it was very grievous for them to hear, that he had refused them his own guidance, and would withdraw himself from them, although it was with the promise of an angel to lead them; for little can any possible supply be made by any creature to make up that loss. It was indeed high time for them to put off their ornaments, and be humbled, when their great Ornament and their great Strength, was gone from them in displeasure. Then they put off their garbs of war, and appeared in the penitential dress of sackcloth and ashes.

III. The end of God's thus afflicting his people. And we have these two things to consider in it, both here clearly expressed: 1st, God intention in the means; secondly The power of these means for effecting it *I will go till they acknowledge their offences and seek my face*. and, in the time of my absence, which will certainly be the time of their heaviest affliction, *they will seek me early*.

1. This is God's end in scourging his people; it is only to bring them to a sorrow for their offences, and an ingenuous confession of it. And if he withdraw himself, it is not to leave them for ever and look at them no more. On the contrary, it is, that they may learn whether it is better to enjoy him, or their sins; and that, finding themselves miserable without him, they may leave those sins with which he will not dwell, and may come and entreat his return to them; which he is willing, being entreated, to grant them. And this he removes from them, that, on their return to him, and their earnest and humble seeking of his return to them, they may find him, and enjoy more of his presence than before, and learn to keep it better. He throws his people into the furnace, and goes away, and leaves them there; yet, it is not to let them lie still there, but he is skilful in this work, and knows the time needful for their refining, and then returns and takes them out. His purpose is, to purge away the dross, but he will not lose the gold. Isa. xxvii. 9. *By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this will serve to take away his sin*. As that sin was the meriting cause of the affliction, it clears God's justice; the end he aims at, when he declares his graciousness and mercy to his people, being no other than this, to destroy the meriting cause of the affliction, by their trouble; to take away that sin which procured it, and then to give them peace. That is his design. He takes no pleasure in their affliction for itself, more than they them-

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selves do. Indeed, in punishing his enemies, there is pure justice: their punishments are not for a better end, so far as concerns them, but are appointed to torment them. But to his own people, his purpose is, by afflicting them, only to draw from them their sins, which drive him away from them. And as we see in this the bounty of God, so it instructs us, for our own practice, in the just way both of preventing trouble to ourselves that it come not, and of removing it if it be come upon us. Is this the thing God seeks in punishing us, a sense and acknowledgment of sin committed? Then, if we give him his end, he will not at all needlessly make use of the means. If, therefore, we either carefully shun sinful provocations, or, being guilty, speedily return and humble ourselves before him, he will not enter into displeasure against us; he will be appeased toward us. And on our seeing that which is his intent in punishing, before he begins to punish, he is very well pleased to be thus prevented. So then, if either we follow the advice of the Psalmist, Psalm iv. 4, *Stand in awe, and sin not*, or that other which follows, that we *examine our hearts* concerning sin, before the decree of punishment go forth, or be put in execution on our guiltiness, pronouncing ourselves guilty (as the word is here in the text), which is indeed acknowledging our offences, this is the way to prevent it; and if it be begun upon us, this is the ready way to remove it, for this is the end of it. When the Lord sees his children grieved for their offences and entreating pardon, he is a tender-hearted father, the very *Father of mercies*. Those confessions and prayers that his children utter, enter his paternal ears, the rod falls out of his hand, and he turns his stripes into embraces, and his frowns into smiling. There may be, indeed, a confused cry from the sense of the smart, without repentance, that moves him not. As he directs parents in correcting a peevish child, *Thou shalt not spare for his crying* (Prov. xix. 18), so he himself doth not spare nor leave off for that kind of crying. It is confession and submission that he seeks, not the howling and complaining which nature draws from any under sharp affliction. This the Lord complains of in his people, by the same prophet. Hos. vii. 14: *They did not cry unto me with their hearts: they only howled upon their beds.* A man that is upon the rack for extorting confession, he will cry and roar when he confesses nothing; but it is not that which is sought of him, pain forces him to that; it is confession, and when he begins the least word of that, they presently stay and release him. Thus it was with David, and he tells it us, and distinguishes these two expressly, Psalm xxxii. 3–5. He tells us of his *roaring* under the hand of God, but that did no good: he found no ease but that, so long as he *kept silence* from this confession. But as soon as he began, or did but offer at acknowledgment, one word of confession, yea, the promise of it, brought him the release that a whole day's roaring could not obtain. *I roared all day long*, but thou helpedst me not, still *Thine hand continued heavy upon me.* But I *acknowledged my sin; I said I would confess my transgression, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.*

Now, to the end we might confess aright, there must be a searching of our hearts for our sins, and for some particular one or more which God's afflictions aim at. And, First, if we can not easily find it out, consider the nature of the affliction. Secondly, seek the knowledge of it from God, who will readily, when he corrects his children, tell them what fault it is. Thirdly, however, finding so many, be sure to spare none of them, and then ye can not but fall on the main one which breedeth you trouble.

2. The other thing here concerning the end of affliction, is the efficacy of the means for reaching it. *In their affliction they will seek me early.* It had been early, in a wiser sense, to have sought to him for a reconcilement before the affliction; but here it expresses a most diligent seeking, according to the original word: for things that men are earnest upon, they will be early stirring to set about. For besides that it is a certain prophecy of what was to come to pass in this people, it hath in it this general truth, with which it agrees; to wit, the moral fitness of great affliction to work this diligent seeking of God, before neglected, and acknowledgment of sin, before unfelt; which is expressed in the former clause. Together with seeking his face, there must be the sense and acknowledgment of sin. There is no returning to him, but from it. In following sin, we depart from God, and by forsaking it, we return to him. These are inseparable; they are but one motion. It was their sin made him leave them, and go to his place; and therefore it were in vain to seek him, retaining it, for that would drive him further from them.

Now affliction is apt to bring men to this; such, I mean, as have any knowledge of God. Although they be not converted, yet it works them to a temporary fit of returning and seeking God, such as they are capable of. And those make up the greatest part in the public humblings of a nation, or any multitude of people, having most of them no more heat of devotion and desire of God, than the fit of present affliction works; and therefore, when that ceases, they have done likewise with their repentance and regard of God. Being stirred only by that outward principle, they act no longer that way, than while they are acted by it. Water will be very hot, yea, boil and make a noise, when it is upon the fire; but set it off, and it returns, within a while, to its natural coldness. Thus it was often with the same people. See Ps. lxxviii. And there are still daily too many instances

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of it. Yet the Lord, to show how much regard he hath to repentance, lets not the very semblance of it go to loss. He is pleased, for the repressing of sin, and the purging of his church of gross and scandalous profaneness, to make use of public afflictions to work in many even this kind of repentance, and to answer this repentance with the removal of the affliction that wrought it. With God's own children, this method holds in a way peculiar to them. They may, indeed, as well as others, sometimes stand in need of the rod for their bettering, and it may work it, but there is this difference: their grief for sin and seeking after God do not wholly depend on the lash; they are constant in these things, as having a living principle within them; whence they show in all estates, that sin is to them the greatest grief, and the favor of God the greatest good. Again, when they are surprised with sin, and possibly fall into a fit of security, and must be awaked by some affliction, and it is sent for that purpose, that renewing which it works in them, is not, as in others, a mere present violent motion only, from the impulse of the affliction, but it is real and inward from the grace which is in them, awakened and only set on work by the correction; and therefore it is more abiding than the other. There is in them a special love to God, working their repentings and returning under the sense of his hand. And it is from God's special love to them, which others share not in, that he stirs them up to renew repentance, and upon their repentance takes off affliction, and shows himself graciously reconciled to them. To some, likewise, it may be, that God may use some particular cross, as a partial and concurring means to the work of their repentance and conversion to God. But however, there is in that some peculiar love of God, and that effectual working of his word and Spirit to beget grace in them, by which afflictions are sanctioned and made useful to excite and awaken grace where it is.

Now, in all these different ways, affliction is apt for this effect; 1st. Because it sets men in upon themselves, calls in their thoughts, which, in a fair season, more readily dissipate and scatter themselves abroad. As they observe, that much light disqualifies the sight of the mind, as well as that of the body, and that, in the dark, men's thoughts are more united and deep; thus in the darkness of affliction, we feel readily more inward, and that acquaints us better with ourselves and our sins, and so, tends to the first of these two, the acknowledging of our offences. Besides, the particular respect we speak of, is often between the kind of affliction and our own sins.

2dly. When a man is driven by force from the comforts of the world, which he used to hinge upon, especially by some great affliction which breaks him off from them all, then, if he have any thoughts concerning God, those begin to work with him. He bethinks himself for no other way of help, but thinks, Could I obtain the Lord to befriend me, and show me his favor, that were enough. He could deliver me out of this distress, and in the meantime support me under it. True, I have provoked him, and, which is heavier than all my other troubles, I have made him mine enemy; yet, I know he is very compassionate and gracious, therefore I will go to him, and confess my offence, and I trust he will pardon me. This is the other thing, the seeking of his face. So affliction hath something in it suitable to the work of both. As we see the lost son by his distress came to himself, and then resolved to return to his father. Indeed, when a man is straitened on all hands by a crowd of troubles, and finds no way out, then he finds his only way is upward. We know not what to do, but our eyes are toward thee. The Israelites went before to other helpers; they are reproved for it, ver. 13: but when once convinced of that folly, no more of any such way, but, as follows in the next words containing a description of their purposes, *Come, let us return to the Lord our God*, they acknowledge him as the just inflicter of these calamities: *He hath torn*, and *he hath smitten*. Not a word of Salmanazer or Nebuchadnezzar, but their offended God is their smiter, and so no recourse to other powers for this deliverance, but, *Let us return to him; he will heal us.* Oh then, let us all be persuaded to repentance. And certainly all they who do truly mind the honor of God, and the good of his church, will not be negligent at such a time as this. I trust that God who heareth prayer, will have regard to their prayers and his own glory. Amen.

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## SERMON XXXII.

### SUITABLE EXERCISE IN AFFLICTION.

### Isaiah viii. 17.

**And I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.**

Besides the personal trials and sorrows that are the lot of the godly in this life, every one of them hath a share in the calamities and troubles of the church; not only when some part of these troubles reaches them, for so they are personal and private, but, in the remotest and most exempted condition, there is a living sympathy which this can not divest. And for both their own and Zion's griefs, they have but one support to stay their own souls from fainting under the burden of them, but it is a great one, and strong enough to bear all the weight that can be laid upon it. And it is this the prophet here resolves on. *I will wait upon the Lord, and I will look for him.*



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Among the many sins that the prophets had to contend with in the people, one, and and a main one, was, their unbelief, which indeed is the root of all disobedience and perverseness. The very natural motion of the heart possessed with it, being, as the apostle speaks, *to depart from the living God*, and to turn it aside to dead, helpless helpers, makes it run to and confide in anything rather than in him, besides whom there is nothing at all to be confided in. To this folly, the prophet here opposes God's command and his own resolution contrary to it: ver. 11. *For the Lord spake thus to me*, and this was the echo of his voice, resounding from my heart, *I will wait*. And this he speaks not only for himself, but in the name of all that will adhere to it, and subscribe to his purpose; and he intends it as a leading resolution to the godly both in his own and after times. And it is here upon record for us, as the truest character of faith, and the only establishment of the mind in the days of trouble.

And this is the most powerful way of teaching, when the messengers of God teach, by their own example, those duties they recommend to others. *The Lord spake thus to me, with a strong hand:* not only with the words of his mouth, but with the strength of his hand, he makes the impression of it deep upon their hearts, that the expression of it may come from that inward impression and persuasion of the truth. And that will indeed bind a man strongly (as the word signifies) to the discharge of that high calling, notwithstanding all his discouragements from within and from without, which are so many, that they who have most sense of the nature of it, would possibly undo themselves, were it not the strong hand of God upon their consciences, that binds them to it.

In the words we have to consider, 1st, The trial of faith. 2dly, The strength of it. The trial of it is in the hiding of God's face from the house of Jacob. The strength of it is in that fixed purpose of waiting for him, even in that time of hiding his face.

*Who hideth his face.*] To a natural ear, this soundeth not so much as fire, and sword, and pestilence, and captivity; but, being rightly understood, it is the heaviest word, and very far weighs down all other expressions of distress whatsoever. It is a very large, comprehensive word. All the good that we enjoy in any kind, is but a beam of the face of God; and therefore, the hiding of his face, is a high expression of a dark, afflicted state. The countenance of God shining on them in his universal providence and goodness, is that which upholds the world and all the creatures in their being: the least of them subsists by him, and the greatest can not subsist without him. So that the schools say truly, "There is in the lowest, *aliquid Dei*, and in the highest, *aliquid nihili*." He shines upon all in that sense, preserving them in being, which otherwise would not continue for a moment; as it is excellently expressed, Psalm civ. 29, and particularly concerning man, Psalm xc. 3; Job xxxiv. 13–15.

But the church of God, which we have here under the name of *the house of Jacob*, doth after an especial manner depend upon a special aspect of his countenance for her being and well-being. Her outward peace and prosperity, with all the blessings that she enjoys, are fruits of a more than ordinary providence. And there are blessings in their nature not ordinary, but peculiar to the church, which have more of the face of God in them than all outward splendor of prosperity hath, and therefore are the special love-tokens he bestows upon his spouse, the church, and by which he testifies his marriage with her. And that is the being of a church, the oracles and ordinances wherein God manifests himself to his church, makes himself known there as by his face, which is hid from the rest of the world. And though, in comparison of the vision of glory, the clearest, even extraordinary manifestations of God, are but as a glance of his back parts (as that of Moses, which was singular), yet, in such a sense as suits our present condition, we are said to *appear before the Lord*, and to *stand in his presence*, and *to see his face*, and *the beauty of it*, in his house and ordinances. Psalm xlii. 2; xxvii. 4, &c.

It is true, that the outward distresses of the church and people of God are sometimes expressed by the hiding of his face from them, and so it is a part of what he means here; but it is not all the sense of it anywhere, but it is a word of their affliction, carrying a reflection upon their sin that provoked the Lord to afflict them, and so, implies his just anger kindled by these provocations. And it hath usually the ingredients of spiritual judgments under it, either the depriving them of God's ordinances in their use, or of the power and efficacy of them (as was at this time, we see, the prophet's complaint), and possibly a great measure of that heavy judgment upon the people, of blindness of mind and hardness of heart, a stupid senselessness under their calamities, which is one of the most certain and the saddest signs of their continuance. And this is the prophet's meaning in this place. For without these, or something like them, a church may be in real affliction, and yet, not under the eclipse of God's face for all that. Yea, possibly it may shine clearer on the church in a time of outward trouble, than in the midst of peaceable and prosperous days: as the moon, when it is dark toward the earth, then the half that is toward heaven is all luminous, and, on the contrary, when it is the full to our view, it is dark heavenward. We see it in the common instance of the primitive times, how the gold shined in the furnace, how holiness and purity of religion flourished and spread in the midst of perse-

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cutions, and zeal for God burnt brighter than the fires that were kindled against it, and triumphed over them; and soon after they were put out, how it began to cool and abate, and the purity of religion insensibly died into numbers of superstitious and gaudy devices; and the church grew downward, outwardly more pompous, but lost as much for that of integrity of doctrine and worship. And therefore, in the twelfth chapter of Revelation, there is a woman *clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet*, as full of heavenly ornaments as she is destitute of, and withal despises, those of the earth. And look, again, to the eighteenth chapter, and see a woman clothed in purple, and decked with gold and precious stones, and a golden cup in her hand, but herself, under all these dressings, *a harlot*, and her golden cup full of abominable filthiness. So, then, doubtless, the hiding of God's face from his church, is something beyond her outward lowness and affliction, and greater and heavier than that; the withdrawing of his presence, and his not appearing for their deliverance out of trouble, and their spiritual comfort and benefit under it.

1st. Now, as that is put for the top of all distresses, we should esteem it so. But in reference to ourselves, and to the church of God, I am afraid a great part of us do not know what it is to have this light. If we did, there needed no more urging it; itself would persuade us enough to prize it, and to fear the loss of it. The soul that knows the sweetness of his presence and his face shining on it, will account no place nor condition hard, provided it may be refreshed with that: as the saints have been in caves and dungeons enjoying more of that light in those times, when other comforts have been abridged. Then they have had a beam from heaven into their souls in their darkest dungeon, far more worth than the light of the sun and all the advantages the world can afford. The rabbin who lived twelve years in a dungeon in Francis's time, called a book he wrote, "The Polar Splendor;" implying that he had then seen most intellectual light when he had seen least sensible light. And thus it is with many Christians, in the darkness of distress; if they seek after this light, they may blame themselves and their own neglect if they find not somewhat of this truth. On the other hand, to a spiritual mind, this hiding of God's face will damp and distress the pleasantest outward condition which can be allotted him. It was in the midst of David's prosperity, enough to unseason all: *Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.* Psalm xxx. 7.

Now, if we would have the Lord, to whom believing souls are married in truth and righteousness, to look pleasantly on us, our great ambition should be, to walk in all well pleasing unto him, and to seek of himself those ornaments and that spiritual beauty which may make us lovely in his eyes; as a faithful wife decketh herself only for her husband. For all these inferior things are but figures of that mysterious life of grace which the soul hath from God, and by which it lives in him. There are some singular largesses and outlets of spiritual joy which God gives not to every Christian, nor to any at all times. These we speak not of. But if we would enjoy more abiding influences of his love, and find him accepting of our services at our hands, and measuring his graces to us, coming to us, and giving us access to come to him, putting a life and blessing into his ordinances, though with different degrees at divers times; then our care should be, to entertain this friendship and correspondence diligently, to watch over our hearts and ways, that we admit of nothing that may disturb or interrupt it, and to be jealous of the least abatement; to search and find out the cause of it without delay. And if we do thus, we shall undoubtedly find the Lord willing to converse and dwell with us; and though he give us lower measures of comfort and graces than others get, they shall be so much as will enable us to go on in our journey. Above all, study humility. The high Lord loves to give himself and his society most to the lowly heart. Trust not at all to thyself, nor to anything below him. Lay all thy confidence upon his power and goodness. Ye see here, that it was the multitude of sins that eclipsed his face from his own people, *the house of Jacob;* as he tells them by this prophet, chap. lix. 1. It was particularly their distrust of God, and running to other helps beside him. Ever, the more he is in thy esteem, the more thou shalt have of him; and the more thou believest his all-sufficiency, the more thou shalt find it and know it in thine own experience. Yea, it may be that when his face is hid from the church, in respect of public distress and desertion, yet, it may even then shine bright upon a soul that secretly cleaveth to him and delights in him. So here, the prophet says not that he hides his face from *me*, but, *from the house of Jacob.*

2dly. As for the church, learn by the prophet and other penmen of the Holy Scriptures, to eye and consider the estate of God's church; to take notice how he deals with it when he shines on it and when he hides his face, and be deeply affected with it. Let thine eye be looking out, and let thine *eye affect thy heart*, as it is, Lam. iii. 51. Far be it from thee, to judge it any impertinence, and think it concerns thee not. Truly most of us have both eyes, and if we had twenty more, we should have them all poring upon our private condition. Providing we might have ease and good days, we should feel little for the *afflictions of Joseph.* It were not excusable, if even our secret devotions took us up so as to forget the church; how much less excusable, to have our hearts engrossed wholly by our earthly concerns! And we see here what it is we have to do on the church's behalf: to bewail her sins, begging pardon for those

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evils for which God hath hid his face from her; and what to desire, only to commence her suit anew, as troubles arise, *Cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved;* as the returning of the spring makes all things to flourish, and again puts a new visage upon nature. Mark the harmony and resound of the Lord's returning to Israel; the returning of their hopes and the sweet effects of it, Hos. xiv. 1, 5. All those heavy indignations that are on, or might trouble, the church and themselves, arise from security, impenitence, and the fruitlessness of the word among them, which makes the Lord hide his face from them. Our part is, therefore, to return to him. Oh, had we hearts to put the Lord to it, he could and would do yet greater things for us. And this we ought earnestly to desire, and with all patience to wait for it; which is the prophet's way, *I will wait.*

The two wheels of the soul are desire and hope. Difficulty sets an edge upon desire; and the appearance of obtaining, upholds hope. And both these are in the words the prophet here uses for his waiting and expecting; for they import an earnest desire, and yet a patient attending upon the issue. Look to that of David, Psalm cxxx. 6: *I wait for thee more than they that wait for the morning*—that watch until the morning, as some render it; in the cold night that watch. The thing the pilot waits for is not a private good to himself, for that could not stand a counterbalance to the evil he is sensible of. The Lord's hiding his face from the house of Jacob was that which troubled him, and his waiting was answerable for the return of that light to the house of Jacob. Grieved that the Lord should absent himself from his people, he looks back upon God's frequent appearings and showing of his face to Jacob, by such visions as gave lustre and glory to the place. See Hosea xii. 9: *We found him in Bethel, there he spake with us*—even us, who have interest in these gracious appearances. And there it is urged for a ground of hope and waiting and calling on God. Now, for the face of God to be hid from those who were the posterity of Jacob and God's own peculiar people, was a sad thought to the prophet, who stays himself with this, that the Lord God had made known to him his purpose of returning and restoring the house of Jacob, and upon this he resolves to believe, and to rely upon God's word for it: *I will wait.*

Hoping, waiting, and believing, are taken indifferently in the Scriptures, and all the difference is only in relation to time. Faith believes the present word, and hope looks out for the after-accomplishment; and the patient waiting for it results from both. So they are but the actings of the same faith in a different notion, and they are indeed the test of faith. Our hearts are naturally of another temper than to take the Lord's word and repose upon it, and, when it is deferred, yea, and cross appearances come in between, yet, still firmly to believe and patiently to wait for the accomplishment. We are of a childish humor. That which we laugh at in children, in little things, such as their minds are set on, we may be sorry for in ourselves as a greater folly, being in greater affairs. We are all in haste, and would have things come as fast as our fancying; and upon the delay of these mercies we look for, are almost ready to give over. That which brake forth from that wicked king's mouth, the seed of it is in all our hearts, when things appear worse and worse: *This evil is from the Lord; why should I wait for him any longer?* 2 Kings vi. 23. It is strange, in court suits and other business of a like nature, how long a man will wait upon another, and think all is well if he speed at last; and yet how briskly we deal with God if he answers not at the first!

But faith teaches us (so to speak) spiritual civility, good manners toward God; it lets the soul see his greatness, and goodness, and truth, and persuades us to wait on him, and not to weary in waiting; *to wait patiently,* as it is Psalm xl. 1. Faith composes the mind, cures that light, fickle hastiness which is naturally in us. *He that believeth shall not make haste,* says the same prophet, Isa. xxviii. 16. And is it not good reason that we wait for him? Is he not wise enough to choose the fittest times for his own purposes? Well may we wait till he be gracious to us, for he *waits to be gracious* to us. Isa. xxx. 18. He is not slack, but is staying only for the due season; his love is waiting for the time that his wisdom hath appointed. And, to express his affection in our terms, he is longing for that time, as well as we are. For the same word is there used for *his* waiting, that both here and in that verse is used for *ours,* and it signifies an earnest waiting or breathing for that thing we wait for; and therefore, since he waits and longs, our waiting is in a happy conformity to him. And thus, with good reason it is concluded, *They are blessed* that *wait for him.* Thus there is a word very answerable, Hab. ii. 3: *The vision is for an appointnd time*—we read, *At the end it shall speak;* but it may be rendered, *It breatheth toward the end;* runs, as it were, so fast that it panteth. The same word is used, Cant. ii., for the rising of the morning.

By fretting impatience there is nothing gained but needless desire. It advances not our business, but perplexes us to no purpose. And, on the other hand, patient waiting loses not a moment, but attains its end in the very due time determined; and hath this advantage in the meantime, that it puts the mind into a temper of peace and contentedness, which a man may act and profess to others, but can not truly have within himself without faith Isa. xxvi. 3: *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.* This waiting is always answered; never marked with disap-

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pointment, as is the ordinary custom of other hopes. Therefore, that which the prophet hath, *He that believeth shall not make haste*, the apostle Peter renders *shall not be ashamed*, 1 Pet. ii. 6. Though he hasten not, but wait, and wait long, yet his waiting shall not shame him; none shall have matter to laugh at him for it, for his waiting shall be repaid with success, his hope shall be accomplished; whereas, any other expectations make men ridiculous, and expose them to scorn, in that they look often for most contentment in those things that deceive them. The brooks that grow dry in summer, are an emblem of worldly hopes. Thus, Job vi. 19: *The troops of Tema looked, the companies of Sheba waited for them. They were confounded because they had hoped; they came thither and were ashamed.* But this waiting on the Lord never yet deluded any. *I waited patiently for the Lord*, says the psalmist, *and he inclined to me, and heard my cry.* Psalm xl. 1. Then he makes his experience a common good; draws it to a general conclusion, ver. 4: *Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust.* Thus he confirms that general truth by his particular experience, and, as the apostle says of them who believe, *sets to his seal that God is true.* Thus ought every one, upon his experience of the Lord's goodness in his deliverance, speak to the advantage of the Lord's faithfulness, and say, "As he is called *abundant in goodness and truth*, so I have found him, and I would have others to rely upon him: if my testimony could do any good to that, or persuade them, they shall be sure to have it wheresoever I come." Thus Psalm xxxiv., the prophet will not smother the Lord's goodness which he hath found: *This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him.* And ver. 8, he invites all to *taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed are they who trust in him.* He will advise others to this upon his own experience. Surely he will know where to seek, when he is again put to it. As he loves the Lord for what he hath found, so he will make use of him always in all his straits. Psalm cxvi. 1: *I love the Lord;* and seeing *he hath inclined his ear to me*, I am resolved upon this course, *I will call upon him as long as I live.*

The difficulties which the prophet's faith here encounters, and which commended the strength of it, are these two: 1*st*, The multitude of unbelievers round about, as a mighty torrent which he was to come against; that so few would rely on the Lord. But he resolves against it, as Joshua did for obedience, *Choose you whom you will serve*, so here, for faith; let others take their course, each one run his own way, my choice is this, *I will wait on the Lord.* And this is no small matter, to maintain the preciousness of faith against the profaneness and atheism of the world. And considering the disregard of God that there is in the society and converse of the greatest part, it is much if a godly mind do not sometimes suffer something by it; and we have need to beware of it.

2*dly*, The other difficulty is in the thing itself, which looks so dark and unlikely, that many of his people are giving over trusting on him, and he seems to give over helping them. *He hides his face, yet I will wait on him alone*, says the prophet. Though all other hearts fail, yet I will wait on thee. Though thou withdraw thyself, and hide thy face, yet I will look to no other, I will stay by thee, and wait on thee. And although not only my days may pass, but ages, before the things be accomplished I look for, yet I will believe they shall come to pass. I will look on them in this notion, though I can not live to see them. And, indeed, besides that the great temporal deliverances which the prophet foresaw and here looks into, came long after his days, it is likely that he looks beyond these too, to the coming of the Messiah, of whom he speaks so clearly both in this chapter and the former, and also in the following. Notwithstanding all the sins of this people, and all the heavy judgments their sins call for and have brought, or shall bring on them, yet he believed the Lord would send them that great deliverer and Savior, his only Son, whom he had promised. Thus the eye of faith looks over the head of many difficulties and of many ages between it, to the thing it expects, and sees it beyond them all (so the word here, *I will look for him*, is to stand upright as a line and look out, answering to that word, Ἀποκαραδοκία, Rom. viii.); desiring and confidently expecting good from him to his church. In these kingdoms, though the outward face of affairs look quite contrary, and the Lord for a time suffer our troubles to increase, and hide his face as not regarding us, suffering things, by the perverseness of men on all hands, to turn to a universal confusion and disorder, yet still, you that know the Lord and his dealing, pray, and believe, and wait, and be assured your prayer shall be answered in due time.

Thus for your personal condition. You that desire the light of God's countenance above all things, though he seem to deny and hide his face from you for a time, yet wait on him, leave him not, for if ye do, you are sure to perish; but if ye wait on him, ye may say, it may be he will be gracious, but if he will not, I know no other to go to; I will still wait and try him. What think ye of Job's purpose? *Though he slay me, yet I will trust in him:* though I saw him ready to throw me into hell, yet I will look for mercy. Faith can not be nonplused. There is in it a pious obstinacy that will not yield to the greatest opposition, nor give over so long as there is any possibility of prevailing. *I said*, says Jonah, *I am cast out from thy presence*, yet for all that, I can not give the matter up for desperate; I must have leave to *look* toward thee; *Yet I will look toward thy holy temple.* Jon. ii. 4. Invincible faith as here,

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*I will wait—I will look.* His doubling the word is meant to express his resolvedness, in the beginning of the verse, and in the end of it. And so, faith conquers the difficulty that makes against it. And this is the purest acting of faith, where there is nothing of sense to support it, and yet it holds out, and, as Abraham did, against hope believes in hope. When the soul is at the hardest pinch, faith will say, I will lie at the footstool of the throne of grace until I be thrown from it. I will not away from it. I will wait on till the last moment.

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## SERMON

### PREACHED TO THE CLERGY.

### 2 Cor. v. 20.

**Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God.**

It *is appointed unto all men once to die, and after that to come to judgment*, saith the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Two sad necessities to sinful man. This last, nature's light discovers not; but the other, though it be seldom deep in our thoughts, is almost always before our eyes; and though few seriously remember it, yet none can be ignorant of it. Against this known and universal evil, the chief of heathen moralists, the stoics, have much endeavored to arm themselves. And others have bent the strength of their wits to master the fear of death, and have made themselves, and some of their hearers, conquerors in imagination: but when the king of terrors really appeared, he dashed their stout resolutions, and turned all their big words and looks into appalment.

And the truth is, there are no reasonings in the world able to argue a man into a willingness to part with a present being, without some hopes, at least, of one more happy; nor will any contentedly dislodge, though they dwell never so meanly, except upon terms of changing for the better.

The Christian, then (not the nominal Christian, but he who is truly such), is the only man that can look death immediately in the face; for he knows assuredly that he shall remove to *a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

The discourse beginning this chapter, occasioned by the end of the former, continues to the 12th verse, where the apostle subjoins an apology, for his high and confident manner of speaking; which apology serves likewise for a very pertinent re-entry to the main discourse of the former chapter, concerning the worth and work of the ministry. But because of the apostle's frequent, yet seasonable digressions, proleptic and exegetic, divers may model the analysis after divers manners.

To take, then, the discourse as it lies here together, abstract from precedent and consequent, I think it may be divided into these two heads: First, the apostle's resolution for death. Secondly, his course and manner of life. Each is supported with its proper grounds or reasons: the former to verse 9, the other to the end of the chapter.

The resolution is so strong, that he expresses it by the words of earnest desiring and groaning. And this resolution for death, springs from his assurance of life after death: *We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* He speaks in his own and his colleague's names. And the whole matter of both is set forth by an elegant continued metaphor. Both the desire and the assurance causing it, are illustrated, First, by their chief cause, verse 5. *Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God: who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.* Both in his gracious purpose for this, hath he made us, and in a pledge of performance he hath given us earnest, even his Spirit. Then they are illustrated by their subordinate cause, faith, verse 7. *For we walk by faith, not by sight.*

His course and purpose—for he both signifieth what he doth, and how he intends to continue to do—his course and purpose of life is, in general, to walk acceptably in this absence from the Lord (ver. 9). And in particular, walking diligently and faithfully in the ministry. Ver. 11, 18.

One reason of this course and purpose, is implied in that illative [διό], which knits this part with the former. And indeed, a good frame of life hath a most necessary connexion with a strong resolution for death, and assurance of life eternal; and they mutually cause one another. That a pious life gives strength against death, and hope of eternal life, none will deny; nor is it less true, that the assurance animates and stirs up to obedience: so far is it from causing sloth, that it is the only spur to acceptable walking. *We are confident*, saith he (ver. 8), WHEREFORE, *we labor to be accepted* (ver. 9).

This purpose is further backed with a double reason, viz., of two pious affections; the one of fear, ver. 11, the other of love, ver. 14; that of fear, arising from the consideration of the judgment-seat of Christ; that of love, from the thoughts of his death. Ver. 14. *For that love of God constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead. And he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again.* These are the reasons that stir up this eminent apostle to a study of acceptable walking in all things, particularly in his especial calling, the ministry of his rec-

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onciliation:—approving himself therein to his God, and as much as may be to the consciences of the people; saying and doing all things with intention of his glory and their good; free from vain glory; not speaking for himself, nor living to himself, but to Him who died for him, and rose again; not possessed with carnal respects touching himself or others; no, nor entertaining carnal considerations of Christ himself, as being ascended, and therefore to be considered and conversed with after a new manner (spiritually) by all those that are new creatures in him, and reconciled to God by him, through the ministry of the word of reconciliation. Which reconciliation God himself hath thus effected (ver. 21). *He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* Who knew no sin, practically knew none; was altogether free from sin, not only from commission and consent, but from the very first and least motions of sin. And indeed no one was thus fit to be *made sin*, but one who knew none, an immaculate Lamb. *Made him to be sin*, not by constraint, not beside his knowledge and consent. The heathens observed, that their sacrifices were successless and unhappy, when the beasts came unwillingly to the altar. We need not fear this point: our blessed sacrifice, who was also priest and altar, offered himself up cheerfully: *Then saith he, Lo, I come to do thy will.* Heb. x. 7. *And I lay down my life for the sheep*, saith the good shepherd, John x. 15. *To be sin;* not only to take the similitude of sinful flesh, but becoming man for man's sake, and to be *numbered with transgressors*, as the prophet speaks, Isa. liii. 12, and *to bear the sin of many*, but the imputed guilt and inflicted punishment of sin. And these sins of many made him imputatively an exceedingly great sinner, and therefore he is said to have been *made sin*, by reason of this imputation; whereupon followed his suffering as a sacrifice. And I conceive, that the reason why the word which in the first language signifies sin, is sometimes taken for the sacrifice, is because the confessed sins were, in a manner, transferred and laid upon the heads of the legal sacrifices. And so saith the prophet, *He hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.* Isa. liii. 6.

He was then *made sin* primarily, by imputation of, and consequently, by suffering for, our sins, as our expiatory sacrifice. *He made him sin for us*, in our stead, and for our good; to wit, our redemption; as follows. *That we might be made*, or *become* [γινώμεθα] *the righteousness of God in him;* but be it *made* [γενώμεθα], it is no otherwise than Christ was made sin imputatively; and if this inference need help, each word that follows will confirm it. *Righteousness*, not righteous; to show the perfection of it, not to urge its unity. *Righteousness*, not righteousnesses; as intimating that it is but one righteousness, whereby we are all justified of God. Not our own, but *in him*, not in ourselves. All which makes it clear, as it were written with the sunbeams, that, by the most gracious exchange, as he took our sins, so he hath given us his righteousness. It is true, this is always accompanied with holiness inherent, but imperfect. By that imputed righteousness, the spouse of Christ is *clear as the sun*, all luminous; but in regard of infused righteousness, she is only *fair as the moon*, but the one half light, and that appearing unequally too, waxing and waning, and having spots at its fulness here below. She is holy in this regard, but righteousness in the other righteousness of God; his by appointing, his by gift and application, and his by acceptance. *Of God in him;* that is, its being *in him* who is called *the Lord our righteousness; in him* in whom the Father acquiesceth, and is well pleased. *Blessed are they that trust in him.*

But to the former, ver. 20. *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God.*

Here we have all the parties requisite in the treaty of reconciliation. God, though offended, seeking peace with men, his creatures, and by sin become rebels: *As though God beseeched you.* Christ the only procurer, and likewise the chief ambassador, of this peace. And then, lastly, have we the sub-delegated messengers of this peace: *We, as ambassadors for Christ. We*, the apostles, and all the ministers of the gospel. For as in their peculiarities, they had no successors, for that is repugnant, so, in those things wherein they have successors, all true ministers of the word are such. The apostle himself calls this embassy, *the ministry of reconciliation*, ver. 18.

*Ambassadors for Christ*, that is, in his stead. In this verse, we have the office of the ministry, under the name of ambassadors; and their message, the delivery whereof is the execution of their office, the entreaty of men, to be reconciled to God. Both the office and the message are backed with due authority or warrant. The office's warrant is, that we are ambassadors for Christ, or in his stead; that is, subordinate to him by his own ordination: the warrant of the message is God's own will who sent them, for it is his mind to beseech you by us.

But to resume the first division, whereof each of its two parts will afford its proposition; and upon these two propositions I shall insist, in what remains to be said.

The first proposition is this: *from their office, ministers of the gospel are true ambassadors, under Christ, from God to man.* As soon as man had divested himself of God's image, his shameful nakedness made him run into the thickets; nor could he ever since then look his Maker directly in the face, nor endure to hear his immediate voice. Therefore, when God himself would come and dwell among men, he veiled his deity with human flesh: there he stood behind the wall, and

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showed himself through the lattices. *Let us not hear again the voice, nor let us see this great fire any more, that we die not*, said the people at Horeb; and the Lord who knew their mould, saith, *They have said well.* Deut. v. 28. *I will raise them up a prophet*, said God, *from among their brethren; like unto thee!* and he did so. As he came for man's good, so, for the same end, went he away again: *It is expedient for you*, saith he, *that I go away.* John xvi. 7. And since that time he hath continued to send men, men yet liker themselves than he was, men subject to like infirmities, sin not excepted. *Even as my Father sent me, so send I you*, saith he. John xx. 21. But the loss in this change were intolerable, did he not allay it somewhat by sending his Spirit upon those men whom he sends to men: *If I depart I will send him unto you*, saith he, John xvi. 7. He is gone indeed, as was necessary, but, being ascended, he caused gifts to descend upon men; *Some he gave to be apostles, some prophets, and some evangelists, and pastors, and some teachers;* all *for the work of the ministry*, and that *for the perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of his body*, Eph. iv. 11, 12.

Thus, then, God treats with man in a human way. He draws not his own to him by immediate revelations, nor rejects he the rest by express words from heaven; but, while he sends his ambassadors indifferently to both, he works differently in them. And the admirable variety of effects of the same message, after the same manner, and at the same time delivered, do not a little set forth and commend that same [πολυποικιλος σοφια του Θεου], *manifold wisdom of God* (Eph. iii. 10); that his word should sweetly melt the hearts of some, and, as it were, more violently break the hearts of others; that it should harden and blind some, mollify and enlighten others; that it should convince those whom yet it converts not, and that by its majesty, though in the mouths of simple men, it should bridle and restrain many of all ranks, whom it renews not: moulding and framing them to an external conformity and square carriage, whereby the world, and the church of God in it especially, are much advantaged. And the lustre of all these effects, is exceedingly set off by the quality of the messengers, being to the world's eye but contemptible men. But had it not been more congruous to the grandeur of this great King, to have sent angels, his ministering spirits, to be the ministers of the word? Had he not better have used those precious vessels for his chief treasure, than to have concredited it to vessels of earth, not to say, to discredit it by so doing? No, his thoughts are not as ours; yea, they are farthest above ours when they seem to be farthest below them. And if we look again, we shall find it more glorious to have conquered so many kingdoms, and brought them to our king, the Lord Jesus, by the preaching of a few fishermen, and such like, than if he had done it by those active spirits. The meanness of the means, raises exceedingly the glory of the sovereign's cause.

Thus we see how the sending of men in this embassy, was requisite for the frailty of man, and how well it suits with the glory of God.

Hence may be deduced some necessary things for all in general, something in particular for these ambassadors, and something for those to whom they are sent.

First, it may persuade all to entertain more respectful thoughts of this function than most men do. Some speak out their disrespect; others, though not expressing it in words, have it lurking in their breasts, and appearing in their practices. To instance in one error or two, which many labor under, springing evidently from a low esteem of this calling.

1. Are there not divers pretenders to it, who being, and possibly finding themselves, insufficient for all other employments, have their recourse to this, making no doubt of their sufficiency for it? Yea, such there are, too many; their worldly friends being guilty either of begetting in them, or of fomenting this presumption. On the other side, be there not others, who, having some advantage of outward rank, or inward endowments, would think themselves, and be thought by those who have interest in them, to be exceedingly disparaged if this calling were mentioned to them, and who would count it a great abasing, yea, a losing of themselves to embrace it? Against these two gross mistakes, may very appositely be opposed this, *We are ambassadors for Christ.* From which expression it is most evident, that the ministry both requires the best and ablest, and deserves them; that the refuse aud abjects of men can not be worthy of it, nor it unworthy of the choicest. It requires able men, because they are to be *ambassadors;* and this will follow of itself. Again, consider, *whose* ambassadors, and in what business: the ambassadors of the King of kings, in the weighty matter of treating peace between him and mankind. Shall it be said of his ambassadors, as Cato said to those who were sent by the Romans to Bithynia counting that three wants were among them, *viz.*, that they had neither feet, nor head, nor heart?

It is true God may, and sometimes, especially in extraordinary times, does, make use of unlettered and low-qualified men; but then he inlays their defects by a singular supply: therefore, that is no rule for us in the ordinary vocation. It is a piece of God's prerogative, to use unlikely means without disadvantage. Anything is a fit instrument in his hands; but we are to choose the fittest and best means, both in our own affairs, and in his service; and if in any, this eminent service of embassy requires a special choice. If bodily integrity was requisite in the servers at the altar under the law, shall we think that the mentally blind and lame are good enough for the ministration under the gospel, which exceeds in

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worth and glory? *Who is sufficient for these things?* saith the great doctor of the Gentiles. Our practices seem to answer, anybody: And it is observable, that carelessness in this kind, is usually the companion of false worship, and too much care of decking, trimming, and making gay the externals of it. It is said of Jeroboam, that *he made high places*, but *priests of the lowest of the people*, 1 Kings xii. 31. As it was said, that the church had. As he said of "golden cups and wooden priests," so we may say of that church which values them so much, they are well looked to, neatly adorned, but their priests grossly ignorant.

This function requires able men, being a weighty charge, and is *worthy* of them, being highly honorable. And doubtless, there is egregious profaneness in the contrary thoughts. The heathen can style those stones more happy than common ones, which are chosen for the building of temples and among these, the altar-stones the happiest. And shall we not account truly happy those living stones, which are hewn out for God's building, and chiefly (so to speak), the altar-stones, the messengers of peace? What can be more honorable than to serve the highest Lord in the chiefest functions of his house? How ought we to account of an ambassador's place, when King David esteemed so highly a door-keeper's office in this king's court!

2. *We are ambassadors.* This may correct another error in the world, though accounted by those that entertain it, a choice piece of policy for God. It is this: the ministry being so mean a thing in the world's eye, and so obnoxious to contempt, it is expedient that it be raised and brought into credit by annexed excessive dignities, high titles of honor, and suitable revenues. It is true, that penury and want of competency in temporals, in those who bring an eternal treasure, argues base ingratitude, and is most unworthy of well-constituted churches. But where the remedy exceeds too far, it becomes worse than the disease, being compounded of carnal prudence and ambition, both of which are *enmity to God.* And this I take to have been one of Germany's provoking sins, and Rome's predominant sin. For these incongruous honors, to speak it in a word, raising some from contempt, teach them to contemn and insult over their brethren; to say nothing of their affronting of higher quality, yea, of princes and kings themselves, while they pretend to be the only supporters of their crowns. And if this their insolency in advancement, devolve them back again in contempt, and their honor become their shame, they may thank themselves. Their Master taught them another method of attaining due esteem. He hath given honor enough to those whom he hath made his ambassadors; and if men contemn this, he takes the indignity as done to himself, and he is able enough to vindicate his own honor. *Let men esteem of us, as the ministers of Christ,* 1 Cor. iv. 1. Here is all the esteem St. Paul requires; and they are unworthy of this who are not content with it. Their best way, whom God employs, is to study his glory, and he will not fail to honor those that honor him.

And this leads me fitly on from the conviction of these common errors, to a word of particular exhortation to those ambassadors, from the nature of their calling so expressed. And it binds upon them chiefly these four duties: 1. Piety. 2. Prudence. 3. Fidelity. 4. Magnanimity.

*Piety*, in two steps or degrees: first, to look they be friends with God; secondly, to labor to be inward with him.

[1.] They are to look that they be friends with God. For it no way suits that they be ambassadors for reconciliation, who are not themselves reconciled: it is certain such will move both coldly and successlessly in the work. What he can do extraordinarily who doth always what he wills in heaven and earth, we question not. He can convey grace by those to whom he gives none. He can cause them to carry this treasure, and have no share in it; carry the letter and not know what is in it; and make them, so to speak, equivocal causes of conversion.

But, usually, he *converts* those whom he makes the happy *strengtheners of their brethren*, Luke xxii. 32. We think, that they who savingly know not Christ, should not be fit to make other men acquainted with him. He who can tell men what God hath done for his soul, is the likeliest to bring their souls to God. Hardly can he speak to the heart, who speaks not from it. *Si vis me flere*, &c. Before the cock crows to others, he claps his wings, and rouses up himself. How can a frozen-hearted creature warm his hearers' hearts, and enkindle them with the love of God? But he whom the love of Christ constrains, his lively recommendations of Christ, and speeches of love, shall sweetly constrain others to love him. Above all loves, it is most true of this, that none can speak sensibly of it, but they that have felt it. Our most requisite pulpit-orators, yea, speak they with the tongues of men and angels, without the experience of this love, are no fit ambassadors for Christ, for his embassy is a love-treaty. Such men are but sounding brass, and tinkling cymbals. The sublimest and best contrived of their discourses, glow-worm like, are as those foolish fires, may have some light with them, heat they have none. When a man speaks of reconciliation and happiness, as if he had some interest therein himself—when his words are animated with affection, as he is like to beget some affection where there is none—so, a pious hearer that is already gained to Christ, finds the embassy drawing him effectually nearer heaven, blowing that Divine fire that is within him, and causing it to mount upward. *As in water, face answereth to face, so doth the heart of man to man*, saith the wise man, Prov. xxvii.



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19. There is a certain peculiar sympathy and sweet correspondence between souls that lodge the same spirit. Those that are united to the same Head, Christ, by reconciliation, find their hearts agreed, and they relish the discourses one of another. Thus important is it every way, both for the begetting and for the strengthening of grace, that the ambassador thereof be a reconciled person.

[2.] As he must look that he be friends with God, so, secondly, he must labor also to be inward with God. For though the embassy be the same, in great part, in the mouths of all God's ambassadors, yet there is a world of mysterious particulars contained in it, and they meet with many intricate pieces in their particular treaties with men's consciences. And in these, know they the will of the King, their master, more or less clearly, according as they are more or less intimate with him. How knew divine Moses so much of the Lord's will, but by much converse with him?

These ambassadors, to the end that they may do so, must labor for integrity. His *secret* is with the righteous. For humility. He is familiar indeed with the lowly; he takes up house with them: *With such a one will I dwell, saith the Lord.* God's choice acquaintance are humble men. For the spirit of meekness. He whom we named was eminent in this, and so, in familiarity with God. Christ singularly loves the meek and lowly, they are so like himself. One thing they must mainly take heed of, if they aspire to a holy familiarity with God: earthly-mindedness. If no servant of the god of mammon can serve this God in point of common service, how much less can he be fit for an eminent employment, as an embassy, and enjoy the intimacy requisite for that employment! These messengers should come near the life of angels, *always beholding the face of the Father of lights.* But if their affections be engaged to the world, their faces will still be that way. Fly high they may, sometimes, in some speculations of their own; but, like the eagle, for all their soaring, their eye will still be upon some prey, some carrion here below. Upright, meek, humble, and heavenly minds, then, must the ambassadors of this great King have, and so obtain his intimacy, mounting upon those wings of prayer and meditation, and having the eye of faith upward. Thus shall they learn more of his choice mysteries in one hour, than by many days' poring upon casuists and schoolmen, and such like. This ought to be done, I confess; but above all, the other must not be omitted. Their chief study should be, that of their commission, the Holy Scriptures. The way to speak skilfully from God, is, often to hear him speak. *The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned,* saith the evangelic prophet (chiefly intending Christ), *to speak a word in season to the weary.* Ay, that is the learnedest tongue, when all is done. But how?—*He wakeneth me morning by morning; he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.* Isa. l. 4.

Thus we see how these ambassadors have need to be friends, and intimate friends with their Lord. For if they be much with God in the mount, their returns to men will be with brightness in their faces, and the law in their hand; their lives and their doctrines shall be heavenly.

2. The second requisite of these ambassadors is *prudence,* or dexterity to manage their Master's business. Wise princes and states, in choosing their ambassadors, above all other kinds of learning, have respect to practical abilities; and they that can best read the several geniuses and dispositions of several nations and particular men, and accordingly know how to treat with every one according to their temper, to speak to them in their own language, are judged the fittest men for that employment. Great is the diversity of humors among men: some are timorous, some rash, some avaricious, some ambitious, some slow and leaden, others precipitant and mercurial, and many other varieties. Now, to know how to deal with each of these in their own kind, for the advancement of his Master's business, is a special discretion in an ambassador. And those ambassadors we speak of, had as much need of it as any: they have men of all, both outward and inward differences, to deal with, and the same men so different from themselves at divers times, that they are hardly the same; some ignorant, others learned, some weak, others strong, some secure with false presumptions, others tormented with false fears. And much prudent consideration of those differences, and accommodating themselves thereunto in the matter and manner of their discourses, is very expedient in their treaties. *Of some have compassion, plucking them out of the fire, making a difference.* Jude 22. What other is St. Paul's *becoming all things to all men, that he might win some?* 1 Cor. ix. 22. And this policy is far different from temporizing, and compliance with evil, which in no case can be tolerated in these ambassadors, for that is disadvantageous to their business: it may be the way of their own promotion, but it is not the way to advance their Master's kingdom, which end should be the square of all their contrivances, and with it nothing will suit but what is upright. A kind of guile they may use, but it must carry their King's impress; it must be a holy guile; and such the ministers of the gospel not only may, but ought to study. Fishers of men they are, and why may they not use certain baits, and diversity of them? But as their catching is not destructive, but saving, so must all their baits be. They must quarter dovelike simplicity and serpentine wisdom together, as he commanded them, who sent them on this embassy.

3. Their third duty is *fidelity;* and that both in the matter of their embassy, and in

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the manner of delivering it. In the matter they must look to their commission, and declare the whole counsel of God, not adding nor abating anything. We know how heinously kings take the presumption of their ambassadors in this kind; though reason be pretended, and perhaps justly, yet even they account obedience better than sacrifice; yea, some of them have been so precise and tender of their prerogative, that they have preferred a damageable affront to their commands, before a profitable breach of them. And above all kings, this King, who is above them all, hath good reason to be punctual in this; for princes' instructions may be imperfect, and as things may fall out, prejudicial to their purpose, but his are most complete, and always so suitable to his end, that they can not be bettered. The matter, then, of this embassy is unalterable: in that, these ambassadors must be faithful. Faithful, also, in the manner of delivering it; with singleness and diligence. [1.] With *singleness*, free from by-respects, not seeking their own honor or advantage, but their Master's; abasing themselves where need is, that he may be magnified; never hazarding the least part of his rights for the greatest benefit that could accrue to themselves. The treachery of an ambassador is of all the most intolerable; to deceive under trust. If any who bear the name of God's legates, think to deceive him, they deceive themselves. He can not be mocked. They must all appear before his judgment-seat, and be unveiled before men and angels. Knowing, therefore, *the terrors of the Lord*, let them go about his work with candor and singleness of heart. And [2] with *diligence*. *He that is diligent in his work, shall stand before princes*, saith the wise prince, Prov. xxii. 29. The great Prince of Peace shall admit those to stand eminently before him who are diligent in his embassy of peace. Such are they who make it their meat and their drink, as Christ himself did, who accept all occasions, yea, seek and make occasions, to treat with men for God. That oracle-like preaching of one sermon or two in a year is far from this sedulity and instancy in treating, which are requisite in God's ambassadors. The prince of darkness hath more industrious agents than so: they *compass sea and land to make a proselyte*; they hold to it, and are content to lose many a labor, that some one may prosper.

And this may meet with the discontent that some ministers take at their great pains and little success. We see, Satan's ministers can comport with this. Since it is no just exception against God's work, still be in thy business, and refer the issue to thy Master. *Wait on God, and do good*, saith the royal psalmist, Psalm xxxvii. 3. *Sow thy seed in the morning, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not which will prosper*, saith the wise son, Eccl. xi. 6. As he moralist speaks of benefits, a man may lose many words among the people, that some one may not be lost. *I am all things to all*, saith the apostle, *that I may gain some*. 1 Cor. ix. 20. And though in continuing diligent, thy diligence should still continue fruitless to others, to thee it shall not be so. Thy God is a discreet Lord: as he hath not put events into thy hand, he will not exact them at thy hands. Thou art to be accountable for planting and watering, but not for the increase. Be not wanting in thy task, and thou shalt not want thy recompense. Shouldst thou be forced to say with the prophet, *I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for naught*, in regard of success, yet, if thou hast labored, so labored as to spend thy strength in that service, thou must add with him, *Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God*. Isa. xlix. 4.

4. The last duty recommendable to these ambassadors is *magnanimity*, which is no less needful than the preceding. Many a difficulty and discouragement is to be encountered in this service; and, which is worse, some temptations of prosperity and advancement. If you persist to plead freely for your Master, you shall be the very mark of the world's enmity. What mischief is there that Christ hath not foretold his disciples to expect at their hands? For Christ circumvents no man to his service; he tells them what they shall meet with: *They shall prosecute you through their courts*, ecclesiastical and civil; *deliver you up to councils*, and *scourge you in their synagogues, and accuse before governors and kings* (Matt. x. 17); yea, *they shall think they do God good service when they kill you*, his own ambassadors. Many mountains are to be climbed in going this embassy, and the rage of many a tempest to be endured. *His animis opus est, et pectore firmo*. Courage, then, ambassadors of the Most High! See if you can rise above the world, and tread upon her frownings with the one foot, and her deceitful smilings with the other. Slight her proffers, and contemn likewise her contempts. There is honor enough in the employment, to cause you to answer all oppositions with disdain. Let it be as impossible to turn you aside from your integrity, as the sun from its course. For that message which you carry shall be glorious in the end: it shall conquer all opposite powers. When you seem exposed in your voyage to the fury of winds and waves, remember what you carry. *Cæsarem vehis, et fortunam ejus*, as he said; it can not suffer shipwreck. Let no sufferings dismay you. For a generous ambassador will always account it far more honorable to suffer the worst things for doing the best service he can to his master, than to enjoy the world's best rewards for the least point of disloyalty. And if ever Master was worthy the suffering for, yours is. Happy are you when they persecute you for his sake, as himself hath told, Matthew v. 10. There are honorable examples to look back to—*So*

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*persecuted they the prophets;* and a precious recompense to look forward to—*Great is your reward in heaven.*

Our blessed Redeemer refused no hardships for the working out of this peace, which is your embassy. He knew what entertainment did abide him in the world, what contempts would be put upon him by mankind whom he came to redeem; he knew of the full cup of his Father's wrath, that he was to drink for them; yet resolution arising from love, climbed over all these mountains, and happily conquering all those difficulties, attained the desired end. Worthy ambassadors, follow this generous Leader in promulgating the peace he hath purchased. Tread his steps who *endured the cross and despised the shame,* and your journey's end shall be suitable to his who *is set down at the right hand of the Father.* Heb. xii. 2. Well did St. Paul study this copy when he said, *I know that bonds abide me everywhere; but I care for none of these things, so that I may finish my course with joy.* Acts xx. 24. The looking over to that great end, is the great means of surmounting the hardest things that intervene. The eying of that much, will make an undaunted ambassador. And that this lesson of courage is very pertinent for them, will appear by Christ's own urging it upon the first legates he sent out, when he dwelt here below: *Fear not,* saith he, *them that can kill the body,* &c., Matt. x. 28; where, methinks, he propounds, as the chief incentive of courage to these ambassadors, the joint consideration of those to whom they are sent, and of Him who sends them. For, seriously considered, it must needs be found most incongruous, that ambassadors of God should be afraid to speak to men. Fear not them; the utmost they can do, reacheth no farther than the tabernacles of clay. Nor can they touch that without permission: not a hair of their head falls without notice of their Master. But suppose the highest, let them kill the body; thither goes their rage and no farther. *But fear Him who can kill both the body and soul.* Fear not, but fear. As this fear hath better cause, so it is the only expelling cause of the other fear. Nothing begets so generous and undaunted spirits as the fear of God: no other fear, none of those base ones that torment worldly men, dare claim room where that fear lodgeth. The only cause of these legates' fears is the inconsideration of their Master. Would they remember him much, it would ennoble their spirits to encounter the hardest evils of life, and death itself, courageously in his service. Their reward is preserved for them, and they for it; yea, it alone puts them into full possession. For their Master, beyond all kings, hath this privilege: he can not only restore life lost in his service, but, for a life subject to death, yea, a dying life, can give immortality, and, for their sufferings, light and momentary, an eternal weight of glory. Let them be impoverished in his service, it is the best bargain in the world to lose all for him. Let them be scourged and stigmatized, for the ignominy of these sufferings, the spirit of glory shall rest upon them. If that Persian prince could so prize his Zopyrus, who was maimed for his service, how much more will this Lord esteem those who suffer so for him! He is the tenderest King over his servants in the world. Those who touch them, touch the apple of his eye. Let his messengers, then, despise the worst the world can do against them; yea, let them say of death, as he said of it to his adversaries, Anytus and Melitus, *Kill me they may, but they can not hurt me.*

The lessons to those to whom these ambassadors are sent, are: 1st. Do not dishonor them. Remember David and the king of Ammon. No king resents this so much as God: *He that despiseth you, despiseth me.*

2dly. Slight not their message: know whence it comes. This *not discerning* of holy things, is the pest of Christians. The apostle specifieth it in the Lord's body, 1 Cor. xi. 29; it is so in the Lord's word. He condescends, in using earthern creatures, to explain the choicest of heavenly mysteries, and earthern vessels to convey these treasures. And if that which he intended for their advantage, the wretched sons of men make it a stumbling-block, and if they contemn the grace, for the meanness of the persons that are made conveyors and instruments of it, what may they expect?

3dly. Respect even the ambassadors for his sake whom they represent, *counting them worthy of double honor.* For this is the will of your Lord and their Lord, your King and their King. And to this King immortal, be all honor, and glory, and praise, by all the churches, world without end. Amen.

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# EXPOSITIONS.

## EXPOSITION OF THE CREED.

1 Tim. iii. 9.

**Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience.**

That which was the apostle's practice, as he expresses it, 1 Cor. ix. 22, is the standing duty of all the ministers of the same gospel; *To the weak to become as weak, to gain the weak, and all things to all men, that if by any means they may save some.* And truly, one main part of the observance of that rule, is, in descending to the instruction of the most ignorant in the principles of the Christian religion. What I aim at, at this time, is, a very brief and plain exposition of the articles of our faith as we have them in that summary confession; not staying you at all on the antiquity and authority of it, both of which are confessed. Whether it was penned by the apostles, or by others in their time, or soon after it, it doth very clearly and briefly contain the main of their divine doctrine.

But though it be altogether consonant with the Scriptures, yet, not being a part of the canon of them, I choose these words as pertinent to our intended explication of it. They are, indeed, here, as they stand in the context, a rule for deacons; but without question, taken in general, they express the great duty of all who are Christians, *to keep the mystery of faith, in a pure conscience.*

You see clearly in them a rich jewel, and a precious cabinet fit for it; *the mystery of faith* laid up and kept *in a pure conscience.* And these two are not only suitable but inseparable, as we see in the first chapter of this epistle, ver. 10: they are preserved and lost together, they suffer the same shipwreck; the casting away of the one, is the shipwreck of the other: if the one perish, the other can not escape. Every believer is the temple of God; and as the tables of the law were kept in the ark, this *pure conscience* is the ark that holds *the mystery of faith.* You think you are believers, you do not question that, and would take it ill that others should. It is very hard to convince men of unbelief, directly and in itself. But if you do believe this truth, that the only receptacle of saving faith, is, a purified conscience, then, I beseech you, question yourselves concerning *that:* being truly answered in it, it will resolve you touching your faith, which you are so loath to question in itself. Are your consciences pure? Have you a living hatred and antipathy against all impurity? Then, surely, faith is there; for it is the peculiar virtue of faith to *purify the heart* (Acts xv. 9), and the heart so purified, is the proper residence of faith, where it dwells and rests as in its natural place. But have you consciences that can lodge pride, and lust, and malice, and covetousness, and such like pollutions? Then, be no more so impudent as to say, you believe, nor deceive yourselves so far as to think you do. The blood of Christ never speaks peace to any conscience but the same that it *purifies from dead works to serve the living God.* Heb. ix, 13, 14. As that blood is a sacrifice to appease God's wrath, so, it is a laver to wash our souls; and, to serve both ends, it is as was the blood of legal sacrifices, both offered up to God and sprinkled upon us, as both are expressed in the apostle's words there. Do not think that God will throw this jewel of faith into a sty or kennel, a conscience full of defilement and uncleanness. Therefore, if you have any mind to these comforts and the peace that faith brings along with it, be careful to lodge it where it delights to dwell, *in a pure conscience.* Notwithstanding the unbelieving world mocks the name of *purity*, yet, study you, above all, that purity and holiness which may make your souls a fit abode for *faith*, and for that peace which it worketh, and for that Holy Spirit who works both in you.

Faith is either the doctrine which we believe, or that grace by which we believe that doctrine. Here, I conceive, it is both, met and united in the soul. As they say of the understanding in the schools, *Intelligendo fit illud quod intelligit*, so, faith, apprehending its proper object, is made one with it. Faith is kept *in a pure conscience;* that is, both that pure doctrine of the gospel which faith receives, and that faith which receives it, are together fitly placed and preserved, when they are laid up in a pure conscience. The doctrine of faith can not be received into, nor laid up in the soul, but by that faith which believes it, and that faith hath no being, without believing that doctrine. And both are fitly called *the mystery of faith.* The doctrine is mysterious, and it is a mysterious work, to beget faith in the heart to receive it. For the things we must believe, are very high and heavenly, and our hearts are earthly and base till the spirit renew them. In our con-

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fession of faith we have both expressed. The first word, is a profession of faith, which receives the doctrine as true, *I believe;* and the articles themselves contain the sum of the doctrine believed. And if we who profess this faith, have within us *pure consciences*, wherein *the mystery of faith*—the doctrine of faith believed, and the grace of faith believing it, both together as one—may reside, dwell, and be preserved, then is the text completely answered in the present subject.

Remember, then, since we profess this faith, which is the proper seat of faith. Not our books, our tongues only, or memories, or judgment, but our conscience; and not our natural conscience defiled and stuffed with sin, but renewed and sanctified by grace. *Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience.*

*I believe in God the Father:*

Not to insist here on the nature of faith, taking it as comprehensively as we can, it is no other than a supernatural belief of God, and confidence in him. Whether we call God, or the word of God, the object of faith, there is no material difference; for it is God in the word, as revealed by the word, that is that object. God is that *veritas incomplexa* (as they speak) which faith embraces; and the word, the *veritas complexa* which contains what we are to conceive of God, and to believe concerning him. As in the gospel, the peculiar object of that faith which saves fallen man, it is all one whether we say it is Christ or the promises; for it is Christ revealed and held forth in the promises, that faith lays hold on. *In him are all the promises of God, yea, and in him, Amen.* 2 Cor. i. 20. So that it is all one act of faith that lays hold on Christ, and on the promises, for they are all one: he is in them, and therefore faith rests on them, because they include Christ who is our rest and our peace; as a man at once receives a ring and the precious stone that is set in it. This once rightly understood, any further dispute about placing faith in the understanding or in the will, is, possibly, in itself not at all needful: sure I am, it is no way useful for you. Take heed of carnal, profane presumption, for that will undo you; and labor to be sure of such a faith as dwells in a pure conscience, and it will be sure not to deceive you.

That confidence which this expression bears, believing in God, supposes certainly (as all agree), a right belief concerning God, both that he is, and what he is, according as the word reveals him: especially what he is relating to us. These three we have together, Heb. xi. 6. *He that cometh to God must believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* 1. That he *is*. 2. To trust his word, believing that he is true to his promises, *a rewarder of them that seek him.* 3. Upon these follows *coming to him*, which is this believing in that God which the apostle speaks of, that reliance and resting of the soul upon him, which results from that right belief concerning him, and trusting the testimony of his word, as it reveals him.

We have discoursed of the attributes of God elsewhere, as also of the Trinity, which is here expressed in these words: *I believe in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.* That sublime mystery is to be cautiously treated of, and rather humbly to be admired, than curiously dived into. The day will come (truly, *a day*, for here we are beset with the gloomy nightly shades of ignorance), wherein we shall *see him as he is.* 1 John iii. 2. In the meantime, let us devoutly worship him, as he has revealed himself to us; for this is the true way to that heavenly country where we shall see him face to face. And it is our interest here to believe the Trinity of persons in the Unity of the Godhead, and to trust in them as such: for this is the spring of all our hope, that the Middle of the THREE became our Mediator, and the Holy Spirit our guide and teacher, and the Father reconciles us to himself by the Son, and renews us by the Spirit.

*The Father.*] First, the Father of his only begotten Son, Christ, and through him, our Father by the grace of adoption. And so Christ does clearly insinuate the order of our filiation: *I ascend to my Father and your Father, my God and your God.* He says not, to *our* Father, but, *to my Father and your Father;* first mine, and then yours through me.

*Almighty.*] This also belongs to the attributes of God: so we shall be but short on it here. *Almighty*, able in himself to do all things, and the source of all power in others, all the power in the creature being derived from him; so that it can not altogether equal his, nor resist him, no, nor at all *be* without him. Whosoever they be who boast in their own strength in any kind, and swell highest in conceit of it, they are yet but as brittle glass in the hand of God: he can not only break it to pieces by the strength of his hand, but if he do but withdraw his hand from supporting it, it will fall and break of itself.

*Maker of heaven and earth.*] The Son and the Spirit were, with the Father, authors of the creation: but it is ascribed to the Father, particularly in regard of the order and manner of their working. Whether natural reason may evince the creation of the world, we will not dispute; we know that he who had very much of that, and who is the great master of it in the schools, could not see it by that light. Yet there is enough in reason to answer all the false cavils of profane men, and very much to justify the truth of this we believe. However, we must endeavor to believe it by Divine faith, according to that of the apostle, Heb. xi. 3. *By faith we believe that the worlds were framed by the word of God.* And this is the first article we meet withal in the Scriptures, and our faith is put

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to it in a very high point in the very entrance, Gen. i. 1. *In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth*:—speaking like himself; it is not proved by demonstrations, or any kind of arguments, but is asserted by the authority of God. And with that which begins the books of the law, John begins his gospel; that upon his word who, by his word, made the world, we may believe that he did so. This is fitly added to the title of Almighty, as a work of almighty power, and therefore a clear testimony of it; and both together well suit with our profession of believing in him. For this is a main support of our faith, to be persuaded of his power on whom we trust. *Our God is able to deliver us*, said they, Dan. iii. 17. And Abraham, the apostle says, *offered up his son, accounting* (or reasoning with himself, or laying his reckoning) *that God was able to raise him from the dead*, Heb. xi. 19.

We make more bold to speak out our own questioning of the love and good-will of God, because we think we have some reason in that from our own unworthiness; but if we would sound our own hearts, we should often find in our distrust some secret doubtings of God's *power*, Psalm lxxviii. 19. *Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?* said they; though accustomed to miracles, yet still unbelieving. We think we are strongly enough persuaded of this, but our hearts deceive us. *Quæ scimus cùm necesse non est, ea in necessitate nescimus*, says Bernard: The things which we seem to know when it is not necessary for us to know them, we find, when necessary, that we know not. *The heart is deceitful*, Jer. xvii. 9—where he is speaking of trusting. It is not for nothing, that God by his prophets so often inculcates this doctrine of his power, and this great instance of it, the creation, when he promises great deliverances to his church, and the destruction of their enemies. See Isa. xlv. 12, and li. 12. What can be too hard for him, who found it not too hard to make a world of nothing? If thou look on the public, the enemies of the church are strong: if on thyself, thou hast indeed strong corruptions within, and strong temptations without: yet, none of these are almighty, as thy God is. What is it thou wouldst have done, that he can not do if he think fit? And if he think it not fit, if thou art one of his children, thou wilt think with him; thou wilt reverence his wisdom, and rest satisfied with his will. This is believing indeed; the rolling all our desires and burdens over upon an almighty God, and where this is, it can not choose but establish the heart in the midst of troubles, and give it a calm within in the midst of the greatest storms.

And try what other confidences you will, they shall prove vain and lying in the day of trouble. He that thinks to quiet his mind and find rest by worldly comfort, is, as Solomon compares his drunkard, *like one that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or, that sleepeth on the top of a mast*, Prov. xxiii. 34: he can have but unsettled rest and repose that lies there. *But he that trusteth in the Lord, is as Mount Sion that can not be removed.* Psalm cxxv. 1. When we lean upon other props beside God, they prove broken reeds, that not only fail, but pierce the hand that leans on them. Jer. xvii. 7.

There is yet another thing in this article, which serves further to uphold our faith, that of necessity. He who made the world by his power, doth likewise rule it by his providence. It is so great a fabric as can not be upheld and governed by any less power than that which made it. He did not frame this world as the carpenter his ship, to put it into other hands and look no more after it; but as he made it, so he is the continual pilot of it, sits still at the helm, and guides it; yea, he commands the winds and seas, and they obey him. And this serves much for the comfort of the godly, but I can not here insist on it.

*And in Jesus Christ.*]

The two great works of God, by which he is known to us, are creation and redemption, which is a new or second creation. The Son of God, as God, was with the Father, as the worker of the former; but as God-man, he is the author of the latter. St. John begins his gospel with the first, and from that passes on to the second. *In the beginning was the Word—by him were all things made.* But at verse 14, the other is expressed: *The Word was made flesh, and he dwelt among us*, had a tent like ours, and made of the same materials. He adds, *He was full of grace and truth;* and for this end (as there follows), *that we might all receive of his fulness, grace for grace.* And this is that great work of new creation. Therefore the prophet Isaiah, foretelling this great work from the Lord's own mouth, speaks of it in these terms, ch. li. 16: *That I may plant the heavens and lay the foundation of the earth, and say unto Sion, Thou art my people.* That making of a new people to himself in Christ, is as the framing of heaven and earth. Now this restoration by Jesus Christ, supposes the ruin and misery of man by his fall, that sin and death under which he is born. This we all seem to know, and acknowledge, and well we may for we daily feel the woful fruits of that bitter root; but the truth is, the greatest part of us are not fully convinced, and therefore do not consider this gulf of wretchedness into which we are fallen. If we were, there would be more cries among us for help to be drawn out and delivered from it: this great Deliverer, this Savior would be of more use, and of more esteem with us. But I can not now insist on that point.

Only consider, that this makes the necessity of a Mediator. The disunion and distance which sin hath made between God and man, can not be made up but by a Mediator, one to come between; so that there is now no be-

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lieving in God the Father, but by this believing in Jesus his Son; no appearing without horror, yea, without perdition, before so just a Judge highly offended, but by the intervention of so powerful a Reconciler, able to satisfy and appease him. And he tells it us plainly and graciously, that we mistake not our way, *No man cometh unto the Father but by me*, John xiv. 6.

Few are our thoughts concerning God and returning to him; but if we have any, this is our unhappiness, that naturally we are subject to leave out Christ in them. We think there is something to be done: we talk of repentance, of prayer, and of amendment, though we have not these neither. But if we had these, there is yet one thing necessary above all these, which we forget; there is absolute need of a Mediator to make our peace, and restore us into favor with God, one who must for that end do and suffer for us what we can neither do nor suffer. Though we could shed rivers of tears, they can not wash out the stain of any one sin; yea, there is some pollution in our very tears, so that they themselves have need to be washed in the blood of Jesus Christ.

*Jesus Christ.*] Our anointed Savior, anointed to be our King, our great High Priest, and our Prophet, and in all these, our Savior: our *prophet* to teach us the way of salvation, our *priest* to purchase it for us, and our *king* to lead and protect us in the way, and to bring us safe to the end of it. Thus is his name full of sweetness and comfort, *Mel in ore, in aure melos, in corde medicina*, as Bernard speaks: Honey in the mouth, music to the ear, a cordial to the heart. It is a rich ointment, and, in the preaching of the gospel, *an ointment poured forth* (Cant. i. 3), diffusing its fragrant smell, for which the *virgins*, the chaste, purified souls of believers, *love him;* such as have *their senses exercised*, as the apostle speaks (Hebrews v. 14), their spiritual smelling not obstructed with the pollutions of the world, but quick and open to receive and be refreshed with the smell of this precious name of Jesus.

*His only Son.*] Other sons he hath, angels and men, by creation, and adoption, but this his only begotten Son, as God, by eternal and ineffable generation, and as man, peculiarly the Son of God, both in regard of his singular unexampled conception by the Holy Ghost, and by that personal union with the Deity which accompanied that conception, and by that fulness of all grace which flowed from that union. The unfolding of these would require a long time, and, after all, more would remain unsaid and unconceived by us; for, *his generation who can declare?* Isaiah liii. 8.

Let us remember this, that our sonship is the product of his. *He is the only begotten Son of God*, and yet, *To as many as receive him, he gave this privilege, to be the sons of God.* John i. 12 and 14.

*Our Lord.*] Both by our loyal subjection to him, and our peculiar interest in him: these go together. Willing subjection and obedience to his laws, is an inseparable companion, and therefore a certain evidence of our interest in his grace.

*Conceived by the Holy Ghost.*] This is that *great mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh;* the King of Glory after a manner divesting himself of his royal robes, and truly putting on *the form of a servant*, the Holy Ghost framing him a body in the Virgin's womb. Not that it was impossible to have made his human nature sinless in the ordinary way (though the schools usually give that reason), but that by that miraculous and peculiar manner of birth, he might be declared to be more than man, as being a way more congruous both to the greatness of his person and the purity of his human nature.

*Born of the Virgin Mary.*] He was not only of the same nature with man, which he might have been by a new-created humanity, but of the same stock, and so, a fit Savior, a *near kinsman*, as the word which in Hebrew is a *Redeemer*, doth signify; bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. We see, then, the person of our Mediator is very fit for that his office, having both the natures of the parties at variance which he was to reconcile. And this happy meeting of *God* and *man* in the person of Christ, to look no further, was a very great step to the agreement, and a strong pledge of its accomplishment. To see the nature of man who was an enemy, received into so close embraces with the Deity, as within the compass of one person, promised infallibly a reconcilement of the persons of men unto God. There the treaty of peace began, and was exceedingly promoted by that very beginning, so that, in it, there was a sure presage of the success: it was indeed, as they say of a good beginning, *dimidium facti*, half done. Had God and man treated anywhere but in the person of Christ, a peace had never been concluded, yea, it had broken up first; but being in him, it could not fail, for in him they were already one, one person, so there they could not but agree. *God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.* 2 Cor. v. 19.

Considering the work to be done in this agreement, as well as the persons to be agreed, it was altogether needful that the Undertaker should be God and man, *Humana Divinitas et Divina humanitas.* The mediation was not a bare matter of word, but there was such a wrong done as required a satisfaction should be made. We speak not of what God might absolutely have done, but what was to be done suitable to God's end, which was for the joint glory of justice and mercy, *that mercy and truth might meet, and righteousness and peace kiss each other.* And because the party offending was not able for it, he that would effectually sue for him, must

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likewise satisfy for him. And this Jesus Christ did, as here follows. Now, that he might do this, it was necessary that he should be *God* able to save, and *man* fit to save man; *man* that he might suffer, and *God* that his sufferings might be satisfying: *man* that he might die, and *God* that his death might have value to purchase life to us.

The Son was fit to be incarnate for this work, the Middle Person in the Godhead to be man's mediator with God. That which we had lost, was, the dignity of the sons of God, and therefore his *only Son* alone was fit to restore us to it. The beauty defaced in us was, the image of God; therefore the repairing and reimparting of it was a fit work for his purest and most perfect image, his Son, *the character of his person*, Heb. i. 3.

Now, this incarnation of the Word, the Son of God, is the foundation of all our hopes; the sense of that great promise, *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head*, and of many others of the same substance in the prophets: the great salvation so often foretold, and so long expected by the Jews. When this was fulfilled, that a virgin did conceive by the Holy Ghost, then did the *heavens drop down righteousness from above, and the earth bring forth salvation.* Isa. xlv. 8. This seems to be that which the church did so earnestly wish, *Oh, that thou wert as my brother!* Cant. viii. 1.

*Suffered under Pontius Pilate.*] Though all his life was one continual act of suffering, from his living in the cratch to his hanging on the cross, yet, because of the shortness of this confession, as likewise because this last act was the greatest, and most remarkable of his sufferings, and the Scripture itself doth, as such, mention it most frequently, therefore it is here immediately subjoined to the article of his birth.

It is not for nothing that we have the name of the Roman judge here expressed, under whom he suffered: though it is nothing to his credit, yet it is to the credit of Divine wisdom, even this; considering the nature and end of Christ's death, it being to satisfy a pronounced sentence of justice, though for others, it was a very agreeable circumstance, that he should not be suddenly or tumultuarily murdered, but be judicially, though unjustly, condemned.

*Crucified.*] Besides, it made his sufferings more public and solemn: and the Divine providence ordered this, that he should suffer under a Roman judge, and so fall under this Roman kind of punishment, being in itself a very shameful and painful kind of death, and, by the sentence of the law, accursed, that we might have the more evidence of our deliverance from that shame, and pain, and curse, that were due to us. *The chastisement of our peace was upon him*, says the prophet, *and by his stripes we are healed.* Isaiah liii. 5.

*Suffered.*] That he died, and what kind of death, you see, is expressed. But as many particular sufferings of his body are not here mentioned, so none of those of his soul, but all are comprehended in this general word, *He suffered.* Those were too great to be duly expressed in so short a form, and therefore are better expressed by supposing them, and including them only, in this, *He suffered.* As he that drew the father, among others, beholding the sacrificing of his own daughter, signified the grief of the rest in their gestures, and visages, and tears, but drew the father veiled; so here, the crucifying and death of our Savior are expressed, but the unspeakable conflicts of his soul are veiled under the general term of suffering. But surely, that invisible cup which came from his Father's hand, was far more bitter than the gall and vinegar from the hand of his enemies; the piercing of his soul, far sharper than the nails and thorns. He could answer these sweetly with, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* But those other pangs drew from him another kind of word, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

*Died.*] No less would serve, and therefore he was *obedient even unto the death*, as the sentence against us did bear, and the sacrifice of the law did prefigure. When the sacrifices drew back and went unwillingly to the place, the heathens accounted it an ill presage. Never was sacrifice more willing than Christ. *I lay down my life for my sheep*, says he, *and no man taketh it from me*, John x. 15, 18. *As a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. He gave his back to the smiters.* Isa. liii. 7. *For this hour came I into the world*, John xviii. 37. And this death is our life: though by it we are not freed from this temporal death, yet, which is infinitely more, we are delivered from eternal death, and which is yet more, entitled to eternal life; and therefore do no more suffer this temporal death as a curse, but enjoy it as a blessing, and may look upon it now (such as are in Christ, none other) not only as a day of deliverance, but of coronation, the exchange of our present rags for long white robes, and a crown that fadeth not away.

*Buried.*] For the further assurance of his death and glory of his resurrection; as likewise to commend the grave to us, as now a very sweet resting-place; he hath warmed the cold bed of the grave to a Christian, that he needs not fear to lie down in it, nor doubt that he shall rise again, as we know, and are after to hear that *he* did.

*Descended into hell.*] The more noise there hath been about this clause, I shall make the less. The conceit of the descent of Christ's soul into the place of the damned, to say no more nor harder of it, can never be made the necessary sense of these words: nor is there any other ground in scripture, or any due end of such a descent, either agreed on, or at all allegeable, to per-



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suade the choosing of it as the best sense of them. Not to contest other interpretations, I conceive, with submission, that it differs not much, possibly nothing, from the plain word of his burial. Not that the author or authors of this so brief a confession, would express one thing by divers words, but that, it may be, in the more ancient copies, only the one of them hath been in the text, and in after copies, in transcribers' hands, the other hath crept into it out of the margin. But retaining it by all means as it is, it may signify the abode and continuance of Christ's body in the grave; in which time he seems to have been swallowed up of death, and that the pit had shut her mouth on him; but it appeared quickly otherwise, for, *The third day he arose from the dead.*

Refl. 1. These are great things indeed which are spoken concerning Jesus Christ, his birth and sufferings; but the greater our unhappiness if we have no portion in them. To hear of them only, and to enjoy nothing of them, is most miserable; and thus it is through our unbelief. Were it as common to believe in him, as to repeat these words, or to come to church and hear this gospel preached, then you would all make pretty good plea on it. But believe it, it is another kind of thing to believe than all that, or than any thing that, the most of us yet know. My brethren, do not deceive yourselves. That common highway faith will not serve; you are, for all that, still unbelievers in Christ's account; and if so, for all the riches of comfort that are in him, you can receive none from him. It is a sad word that he says, *Because ye believe not in me, ye shall die in your sins.* John viii. 21. As if he should say, Though I died for sins, not mine own, but others, yet, you remaining in ungodliness and unbelief, that shall do you no good; ye shall die in your sins for all that. It is such a faith as endears Christ to the soul, unites it to him, makes Christ and it one, that makes all that is his to become ours. Then, we shall conclude aright, Christ hath suffered, therefore I shall not. As he said to them who came to take him, *Is it I you seek? then let these go free;* so, to the law and the justice of God, he says, seeing you have sought and laid hold on me, and made me suffer, let these go free who lay hold on me by faith: if you have anything to say to them, I am to answer for them, yea, I have done it already.

2. You that believe and live by this death, be often in reviewing it and meditating on it, that your souls may be ravished with the admiration of such love, and warmed with a reflex love to him. *Mira Dei dignitas, mira indignitas nostra.* Other wonders, as you say, last for a while, but this is a lasting wonder; not to the ignorant—the cause of wonder at other things is ignorance indeed, but this is an everlasting wonder to those who know it best, *viz.*, to the very angels. Let that loved Jesus be fixed in your hearts, who was for you nailed to the cross: *Donec totus fixus in corde, qui totus fixus in cruce.* St. Bernard wonders that men should think on anything else: *Quantæ, insanæ post tanti Regis adventum aliis negotiis!* Surely it is great folly, to think and esteem much of anything here, after his appearing: the sun arising drowns all the stars. And withal, be daily crucifying sin in yourselves, be avenged on it for his sake, and kill it because it killed him.

3. Will you think anything hard to do or suffer for him, who undertook and performed to the full so much for you? If you had rather be your own than Christ's, much good do it you with yourselves; but know that if you are not Christ's, but your own, you must look for as little of him to be yours. If ye be your own, you must bear all your own sins, and all the wrath that is due to them. But if you like not that, and resolve to be no more your own, but Christ's, then what have you to do but cheerfully to embrace, yea, earnestly to seek all opportunities to do him service?

4. These are the steps of Christ's humiliation; look on them, then, so as to study to be like him particularly in that. Surely, the soul that hath most of Christ, hath most humility. It is the lesson he peculiarly recommends to us from his own example, which is the shortest and most effectual way of teaching: *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.* Matt. xi. 29. He says well, *Erubescat homo superbus esse, propter quem humilis factus est Deus:* Let man be ashamed to be any longer proud, for whom God himself humbled himself so low. *Intolerabilis est impudentia, ut ubi se exinanivit majestas, vermiculus inflatur et intumescat.* He became humble to expiate our pride, and yet we will not banish that pride which undid us, and follow that way of salvation which is humility. Jesus Christ is indeed the lily of the valleys; he grows nowhere but in the humble heart.

*Rose again the third day.*] When humbled to the lowest, then nearest to his exaltation, as Joseph in the prison. He could die, for he was a man, and a man for that purpose, that he might die; but he could not be overcome by death, for he was God: yea, by dying, he overcame death, and so showed himself truly the Lord of life. He strangled that lion in his own den. The whale swallowed Jonah, but it could not digest him; it was forced to cast him up again at the appointed time, the same with the time here specified, wherein the prophet was a figure of this great prophet, Jesus Christ. The grave hath a terrible appetite; it devours all, and still cries, *give, give, and never hath enough,* as Agur says; yet, for all its appetite, Christ was too great a morsel for it to digest, too strong a prisoner for all its bars and iron gates to keep him in. *It was impossible he should be holden of it,* says St. Peter. Acts ii. 24.

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He hath made a breach through death, opened up a passage on the other side of it into life, though otherwise, indeed *vestigia nulla retrorsum.* They who believe, who lay hold on him by faith, they come through with him, follow him out at the same breach, pass through death into heaven. But the rest find not the passage out; it is as the Red sea, passable only to the Israelites; therefore, they must of necessity sink quite downward through the grave into hell, through the first death into the second, and that is the most terrible of all. *That* death is indeed what one called the other *the most terrible of all terribles—the king of terrors,* as it is in Job.

Now, the only assurance of that happy second resurrection to the life of glory hereafter is, the first resurrection here to the life of grace. *Blessed are they that are partakers of the first resurrection, for on such the second death hath no power.* Rev. xx. 6. For the resurrection of Jesus Christ is, to the believer, the evidence of his redemption completed, that all was paid by Christ, as our surety, and so, he set at liberty: which the apostle teaches us, when he says, *He arose for our righteousness;* and again, *It is God that justifies: who shall condemn? It is Christ that died, or rather that is risen again.* Rom. viii. 33. Nor is it only the pattern and pledge of a believer's resurrection, but it is the efficient cause both of that last resurrection of his body to glory, and of the first of his soul to grace.

The life of a believer is derived and flows forth from Christ as his head, and is mystically one life with his, and therefore, as himself expresseth it, *because I live, ye shall live also.* John xiv. 19. Therefore is he called the *the first begotten from the dead and the beginning,* Ἐν πᾶσιν πρωτεύω. Col. i. 18. He is first in all, and from him spring all those streams that *make glad the city of God.* Therefore the apostle, in his thanksgiving for our new life and lively hopes, 1 Pet. i. 3, leaves not out that, *Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;* that is the conduit of all. And he expresses it in the same place, that we are *begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.* But, alas! we prejudge ourselves of all that rich comfort that is wrapped up in this, by living to ourselves and our lusts, and to the world, having not our consciences purified from dead works. How few of us are there who set that ambition of Paul before us, desiring above all things *to know him and the power of his resurrection, to be made conformable unto his death!* Phil. iii. 10. That is the knowledge, as he there expresses it, a lively experienced knowledge of that power.

This rightly considered, will answer all our doubts and fears in the church's hardest times. When in its deliverance there appears nothing but impossibilities, when so low that its enemies are persuaded to conclude that it shall never rise again, and its friends are oppressed with fearing so much, yet, he who brought up his own Son Jesus from the dead, can and will restore his church, for which he gave his only begotten Son to the death. *Son of man,* says he, *can these dry bones live?* Ezek. xxxii. 3. Thus often looks the church's deliverance, which is there the proper sense. The prophet answered most wisely, *Lord, thou knowest;* q. d. It is a work only for thee to know and to do; and by his Spirit they were revived. And so here, it looked hopeless as the disciples thought; they were at the point of giving it over, and blaming almost their former credulity: *We thought this should have been he that should have delivered Israel; and besides all this, to-day is the third day.* True, the third day was come, but it was not yet ended; yea, he rose in the beginning of it, though they as yet knew it not, nor him to be present to whom they spake; but toward the end of it, they likewise knew that he was risen, when he was pleased to discover himself to them. Thus, though the enemies of the church prevail so far against it, that it seems buried, and a stone laid to the grave's mouth, yet, it shall rise again, and at the very fittest, the appointed time, as Christ the third day. Thus the church expresses her confidence, Hos. vi. 2: *In the third day he will raise us up.* Whatsoever it suffers it shall gain by it, and be more beautiful and glorious in its restorement. *Mergas profundo, pulchrior exilit.*

*He ascended into heaven.*] He rose again, not to remain on earth as before, but to return to his throne of majesty, whence his love drew him, according to his prayer, John xvii., which was a certain prediction of it. He had now accomplished the great work he came for, and was therefore, by the covenant and transaction between his Father and him, to be exalted to his former glory; the same person as before, but with the accession of another nature, which he had not before, and of a new relative dignity, being to sit as king of his church, which he had purchased with his blood. And to express this, it is added,

*And sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father.*] See Psalm cx. 1; Ephes. i. 20, 21. By which, according to his allusive sense, is expressed, not only his matchless glory, but his dominion and rule as Prince of Peace, the alone king of his church, her supreme lawgiver and mighty protector, and conqueror of all his enemies; ruling his *holy hill of Zion,* with the golden sceptre of his word, and *breaking* his enemies, the strongest of them, *in pieces with the iron rod* of his justice, as we have it in the second Psalm. They attempt in vain to unsettle his throne; it is very far out of their reach, as high as the *right hand of God.* For ever, O God, thy throne is established in heaven! What way is there for the worms of this earth to do any thing against it?

As in these is the glory of Christ, so, they

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contain much comfort to a Christian. In that very elevation of our nature to such dignity, is, indeed, as the ancients speak, *mira dignatio;* that our flesh is exalted above all the glorious spirits, the angels. And they adore the nature of man, in the person of man's glorified Savior, the Son of God. This exaltation of Jesus Christ doth so reflect a dignity on the nature of mankind. But the right and possession of it, is not universal, but is contracted and appropriate to them that believe on him. *He took not on him the nature of angels*, says the apostle, *but the nature of the seed of Abraham.* Heb. ii. 16. He says not, the nature of *man*, though it is so, but, *of the seed of Abraham;* not so much because of his descent from that particular stock after the flesh, as in the spiritual sense of Abraham's seed, as it is at large cleared, Rom. ix. The rest of mankind forfeit all that dignity and benefit that arise to their nature in Christ, by their distance and disunion from him through unbelief. But the believer hath not only naturally one kind of being with the humanity of Christ, but is mystically one with the person of Christ, with whole Christ, God-man. And by virtue of that mysterious union, they who partake of it, partake of the very present happiness and glory of Christ: they have a real interest in whatsoever he is and hath, in all his dignities and power; and in that sense, they who are justified are glorified. Rom. viii. 30. In that Christ is exalted, they are so too in him. Where a part, and the chief part of themselves, is, and is in honor, there may they account themselves to be. *Ubi portio mea, regnat, ibi me regnare credo.* A man is said to be crowned, when the crown is set upon his head; now, our Head, Christ, is already crowned.

In sum, believers have, in this ascending and enthroning of Christ, unspeakable comfort through their interest in Christ, both in consideration of his present affection to them, and his effectual intercession for them, and in the assured hope which this gives them of their own after happiness and glory with him.

First, In all his glory he forgets them not. He puts not off his bowels with his low condition here, but hath carried it along to his throne. *Bene conveniunt, et in una sede morantur, majestas et amor.* His majesty and love suit very well, and both in their highest degree. As all the waters of his sufferings did not quench his love, nor left he it behind him buried in the grave, but it arose with him, being stronger than death; so, he let it not fall to the earth when he ascended on high, but it ascended with him, and he still retains it in his glory. And that our flesh which he assumed on earth, he took up into heaven, as a token of indissoluble love between him and those whom he redeemed, and sends down thence, as the rich token of his love, his Spirit into their hearts; so that these are mutual remembrances. Can he forget his own on earth, having their flesh so closely united to him? You see he does not; he feels what they suffer. *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou* ME? And can they forget him whose Spirit dwells in them, and records lively to their hearts the passages of his love, and brings all those things to their remembrance (as himself tells us, that Spirit would do), and so proves indeed THE COMFORTER, by representing unto us that his love, the spring of our comforts? And when we send up our requests, we know of a friend before us there, a most true and a most faithful friend, who fails not to speak for us what we say, and much more. *He liveth*, says the apostle, *to make intercession for us.* Heb. vii. 25. This is the ground of a Christian's boldness at the throne of grace: yea, therefore is the Father's throne the throne of grace to us, because the throne of our Mediator, Jesus Christ, is beside it: he sits at his right hand, otherwise it could be nothing to us but a throne of justice, and so, in regard of our guiltiness, a throne of terror and affrightment, which we would rather flee from, than draw near unto.

Lastly, as we have the comfort of such a friend, to prepare access to our prayers there, which are the messengers of our souls, so, of this, that our souls themselves, when they remove from these houses of clay, shall find admission there through him. And this he tells his disciples again and again, and in them all his own, that their interest was so much in his ascending to his glory: *I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there ye may be also.* John xiv. 3.

It will not be hard to persuade them who believe these things, and are portioners in them, to set their hearts on them, and, for that end, to take them off from all other things as unworthy of them: yea, it will be impossible for them to live without the frequent and sweet thoughts of that place where the Lord Jesus is. Yet, it is often needful to remind them that this can not be enough done, and, by representing these things to them, to draw them more upward. And it is best done in the apostle's words: *If ye be risen with Christ, mind those things that are above, where he sits*, &c. Col. iii. 1. If ye be risen with him follow him on, let your hearts be where he is. They that are one with him, the blessed Seed of the woman, do find that unity drawing them heavenward. But, alas! the most of us are like the accursed seed of the serpent, basely grovelling on this earth, and licking the dust. The conversation of the believer is in heaven, where he hath a Savior, and whence he looks for him. Truly, there is little of a true Christian here (and that argues that there is little of the truth of Christianity among us, who are altogether here); his head in heaven, and his heart there, and these are the two principles of life. Let us then suit the apostle's advice, and so enjoy the comfort he subjoins, that by our affections being above, we may know, that *our*

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*life is hid with Christ in God*, and therefore, that *when he, who is our life, shall appear, we likewise shall appear with him in glory.*

*From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.*] We have in this to consider, 1. That there is a universal judgment. 2. That Christ is the Judge. 3. Something to be added of the quality of the judgment. All the three we have together, Acts xvii. 31: *Because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*

1. That there is a universal judgment, we know to be the frequent doctrine of the Scriptures, and it hath been ever the belief of the godly from the beginning, as we may perceive by that ancient prophecy of Enoch, recorded by St. Jude; and we are so to believe it as a Divine truth. And yet, there is so much just reason for it, that natural men, by the few sparkles of light in their consciences, have had some dark notions and conjectures of it, as is evident in Plato and the Platonics, and not only the philosophers, but the poets: it may be, too, that they had been helped by some scattered glimmerings of light concerning this, borrowed from the Jews, and traditionally passed from hand to hand among the heathen, and therefore disguised and altered after their fashion.

If we be persuaded that there is a Supreme Ruler of the world, who is most wise and just, and good, this will persuade us, not only that there is some other estate and being than that we see here, appointed for man, the most excellent, the reasonable part of this visible world; but that there shall be a solemn judicial proceeding, in entering and instating him in that after-being. The many miseries of this present life, and that the best of men are usually deepest sharers in them, though it hath a little staggered, not only wise heathens, but sometimes some of the prime saints of God, yet, it hath never prevailed with any but brutal and debauched spirits, to conclude against Divine providence, but rather to resolve upon this, that of necessity there must be another kind of issue, a final catastrophe, reducing all the present confusions into order, and making odds even, as you say. *Cum res hominum tanta caligine volvi.* [Claudian.] It is true, that sometimes here, the Lord's right hand finds out his enemies, and is known by the judgment which he executes on them; and, on the other side, he gives some instances of his gracious providence to his church, and to particular godly men, even before the sons of men; but these are but some few preludes and pledges of that great Judgment. Some he gives, that we forget not his justice and goodness; but much is reserved, that we expect not all, nor the most here, but hereafter. And it is certainly most congruous, that this be done, not only in each particular apart, but most conspicuously in all together, that the justice and mercy of God may not only be accomplished, but acknowledged and magnified, and that, not only severally in the several persons of men and angels, but universally, jointly, and manifestly in the view of all, as upon one theatre, angels and men being at once, some of them the objects of that justice, others of mercy, but all of them spectators of both. Each ungodly man shall not only read, whether he will or no, the justice of God in himself and his own condemnation, which most of them shall do before that time in their soul's particular judgment; but they shall then see the same justice in all the rest of the condemned world, and the rest, in them; and, to the great increase of their anguish, they shall see likewise the glory of that mercy which shall then shine so bright in all the elect of God, from which they themselves are justly shut out, and delivered up to eternal misery. And, on the other side, the godly shall with unspeakable joy behold, not only a part, as before, but the whole sphere both of the justice and mercy of their God, and shall with one voice admire and applaud him in both.

Besides, the process of many men's actions can not be full at the end of their life, as it shall be at that day; many have very large after-reckonings to come upon them for those sins of others to which they are accessory, though committed after their death; as the sins of ill-educated children to be laid to the charge of their parents, the sins of such as any have corrupted, either by their counsels or opinions, or evil examples, &c.

2. He, the Lord Jesus, shall be Judge in that great day. The Father, and Spirit, and his authority, are all one, for they are all one God and one Judge; but it shall be particularly exercised and pronounced by our Savior, God-man, *Jesus Christ.* That eternal Word by whom all things were made, by *him* all shall be judged; and so, he shall be the Word in that last act of time, as in the first. He shall judicially pronounce that great and final sentence which shall stand unalterable in eternity; and not only as the eternal Son of God, but withal as the Son of man, and so shall he sit as king, and invested with all power in heaven and earth. *By that man whom he hath appointed to judge the quick and the dead. The same Jesus shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.* Acts xvii. 31; i. 11. The powers of the world and of hell are combined against his throne; therefore, they shall be his footstool sitting on that throne. And the crown which he hath purchased for believers, he shall set it on their heads with his own hand. This shall be exceeding joy and comfort to all that have believed on him, that that their Redeemer shall be their Judge. He who was judged for them, shall judge them, and pass sentence according to that covenant of grace which holds in him, pronouncing

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them free from the wrath which he himself endured for them, and heirs of that life which he bought with his dearest blood.

And that gives no less accession to the misery of the wicked, that the same Jesus whom they opposed and despised, so many of them as heard anything of him, he shall sit upon their final judgment, and pronounce sentence against them, not partially avenging his own quarrel on them—no word of that—but most justly returning them the reward of their ungodliness and unbelief. That great Shepherd shall thus make that great separation of his sheep from the goats.

3. Of the manner, we have thus much here, that he shall come from heaven as the Scriptures teach us, he shall visibly appear in the air: he shall *come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*, Matt. xxiv. 30, attended with innumerable companies of glorious angels who shall serve him, both in the congregating of his elect, and in separating of them from the reprobate; but himself, in the brightness of his own majesty, infinitely surpassing them all. 2 Thess. i. 7: *In flaming fire.* His first coming was mean and obscure, suiting his errand, for then he came to be judged; but that last coming shall be glorious, for he comes to judge, and his judgment shall be *in righteousness*, Acts xvii. 31. *Juste judicabit qui injuste judicatus est.* [Augustine.] There shall be no mis-alleging, or mis-proving, or mis-judging there. All the judgments of men, whether private or judicial, shall be re-judged there according to truth, by such a judge before whom all things are naked. And not only shall he know and judge all aright, but all they who are judged, shall themselves be convinced that it is so. Then all will see that none are condemned but most deservedly, and that the Lord's justice is pure and spotless in them who perish, as his grace is without prejudice to his justice, it being satisfied in Christ for them who are saved. The books shall be opened, those which men so willingly, the most of them, keep shut and clasped up, and are so unwilling to look into, their own accusing consciences; the Lord will proceed formally against the wicked according to the books: no wrong shall be done them, they shall have fair justice, and they shall see what they would not look upon before, when by seeing, that might have been blotted out, and a free acquittance written in its stead. And *that* the believer shall read in his conscience at that day, which through the dimness of faith, and the dark, troubled estate of his soul, he many times could not read here below.

We are gaping still after new notions, but a few things wisely and practically known, drawn down from the head into the heart, are better than all that variety of knowing that men are so taken up with. *Paucis literis opus est ad mentem bonam.* This and such like common truths, we think we both know and believe well enough; but truly, if this great point, touching the great and last judgment, were indeed known and believed by us, it would draw our minds to more frequent and more deep thoughts of it; and were we often and serious in those thoughts, they would have such influence into all our other thoughts, and the whole course of our lives, as would much alter the frame of them from what they are. Did we think of this gospel which we preach and hear, that we must then be judged by it, we should be now more ruled by it. But the truth is, we are willingly forgetful of these things; they are melancholy, pensive thoughts, and we are content that the noise of affairs or any vanities fill the ears of our minds, that we hear them not. If we be forced at some times to hear of this last judgment to come, it possibly casts our conscience into some little trembling fit for the time, as it did Felix; but he was not, nor are we, so happy as to be shaken out of the custom and love of sin by it. We promise it fair, as he did, some other time; but if that time never come, this day will come, and they who shun to hear or think of it, shall then see it, and the sight of it will be as terrible and amazing, as the timely thoughts of it would have been profitable. It is, no doubt, an unpleasing subject to all ungodly, earthly minds; but surely, it were our wisdom to be of that mind now, that then we shall be forced to be of: we shall then read, by the light of that fire which shall burn the world, the vanity of all those things whereon we now dote so foolishly. Let us therefore be persuaded to think so now, and disengage our hearts, and fix them on him who shall then judge us. *Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. They only are happy who trust in him.* That which is the affrightment of others, is their great joy and desire: they love and long for that day, both for their Savior's glory in it, and their own full happiness; and that their *love to his appearing*, is to them a certain pledge of the *crown* they are to receive at his appearing. 2 Tim. iv. 8:—*at that day*, says the apostle. This day he esteems more of than all his days; therefore, he names it no otherwise than *that day.* How may we know what day it was he meant? His coronation-day. But of all men, surely, the hypocrite likes least the mention and remembrance of that day: there is no room for disguises there, all masks must off, and all things appear just as they are, and that is the worst news to him that can be.

*I believe in the Holy Ghost.*] God is both a *Spirit* and *Holy;* but this name, personally taken, is peculiarly that of the third person, proceeding from the Father and the Son, by a way that can neither be expressed nor conceived. Holy in himself, and the author and cause of all holiness in us.

It is neither useful nor safe for us to entangle our thoughts in disputes concerning this mystery, but it is necessary that we know,

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and acknowledge and believe in this *Holy Spirit*. It is he in whom, and by whom we believe. We can not know God, nor the things of God, but by the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. ii. 1; nor say that Jesus is God, but by the same Spirit, 1 Cor. xii. 3. We know that this holy trinity co-operates in the work of our salvation: the Father hath given us his Son, and the Son hath sent us his Spirit, and the Spirit gives us faith, which unites us to the Son, and through him to the Father. The Father ordained our redemption, the Son wrought it, the holy Spirit reveals and applies it.

*In the holy Catholic church.*] The remaining articles have the fruit of that great work, the sending of the Son of God in the flesh, his suffering, and dying, *&c.*—what it is, and to whom it belongs; the result of Christ's incarnation and death, *cui et cujas gratia*. Yea, the great design of God in the other great work, that of the first creation, was this second: he made the world that out of it he might make this *elect world*, which is called his church. The Son fell on sleep, on a dead sleep, indeed the sleep of death on the cross, that out of his side might be framed his spouse, which is his church. The holy Spirit moving upon the souls of men in their conversion, aims at this same end, the gathering and completing of his church: he is the breath of life that breathed on these new creatures who make up this society. So then, this is as much as to say, I verily believe that God had such a purpose in making the world, and in sending his Son into it, and they both in sending the Spirit, and the Spirit in his working to make a holy church, a number that should serve God here, and enjoy him in eternity; and I believe, that God can not fall short of his end, that blessed trinity doth not project and work in vain; I believe, therefore, there is such a company, there is a *holy universal church*. Universal—diffused through the several ages, and places, and nations of the world. Holy—washed in the blood of Christ, and sanctified by his Spirit. That it is, which it hath in all ages continued from the beginning, and shall continue to the end of the world, increasing still and growing to its appointed perfection, amidst all the enemies and oppositions that it encounters in the world. *I send you forth*, says Christ, *as sheep among wolves*. Matt. x. 16. The preservation of the church is a continuing miracle: it resembles Daniel's safety among the hungry lions, but prolonged from one age to another. The ship wherein Christ is, may be weather-beaten, but it shall not perish.

So then, you see that this confession is altogether no other than your acknowledgment of God in himself, three in one, and one in three: and his works of the creation of the world, and redemption of man by his Son, made man for that purpose, and appropriate to them for whom it was designed by his holy Spirit; and with this acknowledgment, our reliance on this God as the author of our being and well-being.

*The communion of saints.*] This springs immediately from the former: if they make one church, then they have a very near communion together. They are one body united to that glorious head that is above; they have all one spiritual life flowing from him. And this communion holds not only on earth and in heaven apart, but even between heaven and earth: the saints on earth make up the same body with those already in glory; they are born to the same inheritance by new birth, though the others are entered in possession before them. This their common title to spiritual blessings, and eternal blessings prejudges none of them: their inheritance is such as is not lessened by the multitude of heirs: it is entire to each one. And that grace and salvation that flows from Christ, *the Son of Righteousness*, is as the light of the sun where it shines; none hath the less because of others partaking of it. The happiness of the saints is called *an inheritance in light*, which all may enjoy without abatement to any. They have each one their crown: they need not, they do not envy one another, nor, *Ottoman*-like, one brother to kill another to reign alone. Yea, they rejoice in their happiness and salvation of one another; they are glad at the graces which God bestows on their brethren; for they know that they all belong to the same first owner, and return to his glory, and that whatsoever diversity is in them, they all agree and concentre in that service and good of the church; and so, what each one hath of gifts and graces, belongs to all by virtue of this communion. Thus ought each of them to think, and every one of them humbly and charitably so to use what he hath himself, and ingenuously to rejoice in that which others have, as the apostle reasons at large, 1 Cor. xii.

*A holy catholic church—the communion of saints.*] We may see the worth and the necessity of holiness, how much it is regarded in the whole work. For this very thing did Christ give himself for his church, *that he might sanctify it, and cleanse it—that he might present it to himself a glorious church—holy*. Eph. v. 26. So it is the end of our redemption. And if we look as far forward as salvation, there it will be perfect holiness: nothing unclean shall enter that holy city, and *without holiness no man shall see God*. And look again as far back as our election: Eph. i. 4. *According as he hath chosen us in him—that we should be holy*. And those who are not partakers of this, do but delude themselves, in dreaming of an interest in the rest. There is no washing in the blood of Christ to *remission*, but withal *by the Spirit to sanctification*; no comfort to the unholy in their *resurrection*, because no hope of that to follow on it, which follows here, *eternal life*. No, *without shall be dogs*, Rev. xxii. 15. In the base and foolish opinion of the world, holiness

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is a reproach, or at the best, but a mean poor commendation, as you speak of it disdainfully, a *good, silly, holy body;* and men are more pleased with any other title: they had a great deal rather be called learned, or wise, or stout, or comely, than holy. *Malumus audire, O virum doctum, quam O virum bonum.* [SENECA.] But God esteems otherwise of it, whose esteem is the true rule of worth. That forecited place, *A glorious church:* how? *Holy and without blemish.* That is indeed the true beauty of the soul, makes it like God, and that is its comeliness. We see the Lord himself delights to be known much by this style, and to be glorified by it, *holy, holy, holy.* So Exod. xv. 11; *glorious in holiness.* And the Spirit of God is still called *the holy Spirit.* How much, then, are they mistaken concerning heaven, who think to find the way to it out of the path of holiness, which is indeed *via regni*, the only way that leads unto it! Reprove *you* of holiness, you say; you are not saints. No? So much the worse, for they who mean to share in the pardon of sin and eternal life, must be such. If you be content still not to be saints, go on: but know, that they who are not in some measure saints in grace here, shall never be saints in glory hereafter.

*Forgiveness of sins.*] Notwithstanding forgiveness of sins, there is a necessity of holiness, though not as meriting it, yet, as leading unto happiness. But on the other side, notwithstanding the highest point of holiness we can attain, there is a necessity of this forgiveness of sins. Though believers make up a holy church and company of saints, yet, there is a debt upon them that their holiness prays not; yea, they are so far from having a surplus for a standing treasure after all is paid, that all the holiness of the saints together will not pay the least farthing of that debt they owe. *As for me, I will walk in mine integrity*, says David, Psalm xxvi. 11. How then? adds he, this shall justify me sufficiently? No, but *Redeem thou me, and be merciful to me.* So, 1 John i. 6: *If we say, that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie.* And yet, in the next verse, though we do *walk in the light*, yet is there need of the *blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse us from all sin;* and so throughout the Scriptures. All the integrity of the godly under the law, did not exempt them from offering sacrifice, which was the expiation of sin in the figure, looking forward to that great and spotless sacrifice that was to be slain for the sins of the world. And those who believe the gospel, the application of that justifying blood that streams forth in the doctrine of the gospel, is not only needful to wash in for their cleansing in their first conversion, but is to be reapplied to the soul, for taking off the daily-contracted guiltiness of new sins. It is *a fountain opened* and standing open for sin and for uncleanness, as that sea of brass before the sanctuary. They that are clean have still need of washing, at least, their feet, as Christ speaks to Peter, John xiii. 10.

The consideration of that precious blood shed for our sins, is the strongest persuasive to holiness, and to the avoiding and hating of sin. So far is the doctrine of justification, rightly understood, from animating men to sin. But because of the woful continuance of sin in the godly, while they continue in this region of sin and death, therefore is there a continual necessity of new recourse to this great expiation. Thus St. John joins these two, 1 Epis. ii. 1, 2: *These things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins.*

You think it an easy matter, and a thing that for your own ease you willingly believe, the forgiveness of sins. It is easy indeed, after our fashion; easy to imagine that we believe such a thing when we hear it, because we let it pass and question it not; we think it may be true, and think no further on it, while we neither know truly what sin is, nor feel the weight of our own sins. But where a soul is convinced of the nature of sin, and its own guiltiness, there to believe forgiveness is not so easy a task.

In believing this forgiveness of sins, and so, the other privileges that attend it, there be these three things gradually leading one to the other. 1. To believe that there is such a thing, and that it is purchased by the death of Christ, and so attainable by coming unto him for it. 2. By this, the soul finding itself ready to sink under the burden of its own sins, is persuaded to go to him, and lay over that load on him; and itself withal resolves to rest on him for this forgiveness. This is to believe in him *who is the Lord our righteousness.* 3. Upon this believing on him for forgiveness, follows a reflex believing of that forgiveness; not continually and inseparably, especially if we take the degree of assurance somewhat high, but yet, in itself, it is apt to follow, and often, in God's gracious dispensation, doth follow upon that former act of believing, through the clearness and strength of faith in the soul, and sometimes withal is backed with an express, peculiar testimony of God's own Spirit. To believe, and to grow stronger in believing, and to aspire to the assurance of faith, is our constant duty; but that immediate testimony of the Spirit is an arbitrary beam that God reserves in his own hand, yet such a gift as we may not only lawfully seek, but do foolishly prejudice ourselves and slight it, if we neglect to seek it, and want so rich a blessing for want of asking, and withal, laboring to keep our hearts in a due disposition and frame for entertaining it. The keeping of our consciences pure, as much as may be, doth not only keep the comfortable evidence of pardon clearest and least interrupted within us, but is the likeliest to receive those

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pure joys which flow immediately into the soul from the Spirit of God. The testimony of our conscience is, if we damp it not ourselves, our *continual feast;* but that testimony of the Spirit is a superadded taste of higher comfort out of God's own hand, as it were a piece of heaven in the soul, which he sometimes cheers it withal, where he hath first given much love and ardent desires after himself: they are short of that light, in the fulness whereof we hope to dwell hereafter. But besides that God is most free in that particular, and knows what is fittest for us, the greatest part even of true Christians yet do not so walk, nor attend to that spiritualness that is capable of such visits.

*The resurrection of the body.*] The comfort of these privileges is opposed to those grand evils that we feel or fear: sanctification, to the power of sin; justification or forgiveness, to the guilt of sin; the resurrection, to temporal death; and life eternal, to the second or eternal death.

This is the raising of the self-same body that is laid in the dust; otherwise, the giving of a body to the soul again must have some other name, for *resurrection* it can not be called.

That God can do this, notwithstanding all imaginable difficulties in it, have we not proof enough in what he hath done? Surely, that which he did in the beginning of time, the framing of the whole world of nothing, is more than a sufficient pledge of this which is to be done in the end of time.

That he will do it, we have his own word for it, and the pledge of it in raising his Son Jesus; therefore called, *The first begotten from the dead*, Col. i. 18, this as relating to believers, who are one with him. The resurrection of the dead in general is an act of power: but to the godly, it is an act of grace, to the wicked of justice. Both shall rise by the power of Christ, but, to the one, as a Judge, and a Judge who shall condemn them; to the other, as their head, and their Savior. Joseph's two fellow-prisoners were both taken out of the prison, and at the same time; but the one to the court, the other to the gallows. So shall it be in the resurrection. John v. 29.

The confession of faith being of such things as belong to believers and are their happiness, therefore *their* resurrection is particularly here intended, as we see eternal life and glory is subjoined to it. Our bodies are raised, which were companions and partakers of our good and evil in our abode upon earth, that they may in eternity be companions and partakers of our reward. Those of the ungodly, to suit their condemned souls, shall be filled with shame, and vileness, and misery; and those that were, in their lower estate here, temples of the Holy Ghost, shall be filled with that fulness of joy that shall run over from the soul unto them: they shall be conformable to the happy and glorious souls to which they shall be united, yea, to the glorious body of our Lord Jesus Christ. There shall then be nothing but beauty, and glory, and immortality, in them which are now frail and mortal, and being dead, do putrify and turn to dust. *He shall change our vile bodies, and make them like unto his most glorious body.* Phil. iii. 21. But, as St. Bernard says well, If he would be sure of this, that our bodies shall be conformed to his in the glory to come, let us see that our souls be here conformed to his, in that humility which he so much manifested while he dwelt among men: if we would that then our vile body be made like his glorious body, let our proud heart now be made like his humble heart.

*Life eternal.*] Our confession of faith ends in that which is *the end of our faith*, our everlasting salvation, or eternal life. Of which, all that we can say is but stammering, and all our knowledge and conceiting of it but ignorance, in regard of what it is: yet, so much we know or may know of it, as, if we knew aright, would certainly draw us more into the desires and pursuit of it. The very name of life is sweet, but then especially as it is here meant, in the purest and sweetest sense, for a truly happy life. *Non est vivere, sed valere, vita.* For a life full of misery is scarcely worth the name of life, and the longer it were, the worse; therefore, the miserable estate of damned souls, though immortal in it, is called *death.* So then, by this *life*, true and full blessedness being meant, and then, that added, that it is *eternal* life, what can be imagined more to make it desirable? So happy, that there shall not be the smallest drop of any evil or bitterness in it, pure unmixed bliss; nothing present in it that is displeasing, nor anything wanting that is delightful; and *everlasting*, that when millions of years (if there were any such reckoning there) are rolled about, it shall be as far from ending as at the first.

A very little knowledge of this blessed life would make us clean out of love with the life that now we make such account of. What can it be that ties us here? The known shortness of this life, were it more happy than it is to any, might make it of less esteem with us. But then withal, being so full of miseries and sins, so stuffed with sorrows round about us, and within ourselves, that if the longest of it can be called long, it is only the multitude of miseries in it, that can challenge that name for it. Such a world of bodily diseases, here one's head paining him, another his stomach—*Quam male nobis convenit, nunc de ventre, nunc de capite, &c., hoc contingere solet in alieno habitantibus* [SENECA]: some complaining of this part, some of that, and the same party sometimes of one malady, sometimes of another; what disappointments, and disgraces, and cross encounters of affairs; what personal and what public calamities; and then, sin, the worst



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of all! And yet, all can not wean us! We can not endure to hear nor to think of removing; and the true reason is, unbelief of this eternal life, and the neglect of those ways that lead to it. Be persuaded at length to call in your heart from the foolish chase of vanity, and consider this glorious life that is set before you. Do you think the provision you make for this wretched present life worth so many hours' daily pains, and give eternal life scarcely half a thought in many hours, possibly not a fixed, serious thought in many days? Surely, if you believe there is such a thing, you can not but be convinced that it is a most preposterous, unwise course you take, in the expense of your time and pains upon anything else more than on life eternal. Think what a sad thing it will be, when your soul must remove out of that little cottage wherein it now dwells, not to be bettered by the removal, but thrust out into utter darkness. Whereas, if ye would give up with sin, and embrace Jesus Christ as your joy and your life, in him you would presently be put into a sure, unfailing right to this eternal life. It is a pure life, and purity of life here is the only way to it. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

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# EXPOSITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

MATT. vi. 9.

After this manner, therefore, pray ye.

THE malice and craft of Satan in reference to good actions, works first in attempting wholly to divert us from them; but, if that take not, the next is, to pervert their use, and corrupt them so in doing, that they lose their acceptance with God, and we consequently lose the fruit and comfort of them. And as there is no religious exercise that he hath more quarrel at, and owes greater enmity to, than prayer, being the most constant crosser of his designs, there is none from which he more endeavors to estrange men, either wholly to lay it down, or to frequent cessations; or, if that can not be, but the light of conscience still calls for somewhat at least that may pass with a man for prayer, yet, if Satan can get it turned to hypocrisy and formality, he knows he needs not fear it, for so it wants the life of prayer, and remains nothing but a dead carcass, and therefore can neither please the living God, nor hurt him who is its enemy.

Therefore, our Savior here warns his disciples to avoid, in praying, these two evils, *the vain ostentation of hypocrites*, and *the vain repetition of the heathen;* not to think it prayer, to tumble out a multitude of empty words; and upon that, takes occasion to set this matchless copy of prayer, the way of example being the shortest and liveliest way of teaching. These words, which are but the entry, are not to be passed over: there is in them, I. The duty of prayer supposed. II. The prescribing of this form. First, *pray.* Secondly, *after this manner.*

I. The use and necessity of prayer is taken for confessed, as before, verse 7: *When ye pray*, and *when thou prayest.* And the consideration of this exercise, and of this pattern of it, is with good reason accounted among the most necessary principles of religion. Without it, indeed, all religion withers and languishes. The law of God is so pure and exact a rule, that we can not come near the perfection of it, and therefore fall under its curse. When we understand it so, that drives us to the gospel, to seek salvation there. And the articles of the gospel, of our Christian faith, are so high and mysterious, that nature can not aright understand or believe them; and therefore, both law and gospel drive us to prayer, to seek of God renewing grace to conform our hearts in some measure to the holy law of God, and faith to lay hold on Jesus Christ and salvation, in him held forth to us in the gospel. Prayer is not taken in its strict grammatical sense, in which the words used for it signify only petition or request; but as comprehending, together with petition, confession and thanksgiving. It may be called briefly and plainly, *a pious invocation of God;* and, as we are not speaking abstractly of prayer, but according to the estate of fallen men, it is very fit to add the express mention of the Mediator, that it is *an invocation of God in the name of Christ;* for it never ascends to God as pleasing incense, but when it passeth through that golden censer, and is perfumed with the sweet odors of his merits and intercession. His entrance into heaven hath opened up the way for our prayers to come in, and there is no access to the throne of grace, but by *that new and living way*, as the apostle speaks, Heb. x. 20. But how much better is the frequent practice, than much discourse and business in defining it! Whatsoever is said aright in this, is for the other as its end, as one hath it out of an ancient philosopher, *Inquirimus quid sit virtus, non ut sciamus, sed ut boni efficiamur:* We inquire what virtues are, not to know them, but to have them. And indeed, to do otherwise, is but answerable employment to studying the nature of riches, and talking of them, and remaining poor, possessing none

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It is not needful to stay upon distinguishing prayer by the different matter of petitions, or things to be requested, which, possibly, some of the different names of prayer in Scripture do signify. This may suffice, that it ought to be of such things as are conformable to the will and promises of God, and desired with a suitable disposition of mind; and therefore I call it a *pious invocation*. It is the highest impudence to present God with unjust or frivolous desires. *Quæ scire homines nolunt, Deo narrant*, as Seneca speaks: They tell God what they would not have men to know. We ought to reverence the majesty of God, and regard that in our requests. There is a difference between solemn prayer and sudden ejaculations, but it is not a difference in their nature, but only in continuance. The former is here meant. Only this of the other, it is to be wished that it were more known, and more in use with Christians; for it is, no doubt, a very happy means of preserving the heart in a holy temper and constant regard of God in all a man's actions, and is a main point of answering the apostle's word, *Pray continually*. When in company, and apart, a man useth secret, short motions of the soul to God, that may be very frequent in the day, and at night; whereas men's callings and natural necessities and employments, allow them but some certain parcel of both for solemn prayer. And these frequent looks of the heart to Heaven, exceedingly sweeten and sanctify our other employments, and diffuse somewhat of heaven through all our actions. Solemn prayer, at fit times, is a visiting of God; but this were a constant walking with him all the day long, a lodging with him in the night. *When I awake*, says David, *I am still with thee*, Psalm cxxxix. 18. And these sudden dartings of the soul heavenward, may sometimes have more swiftness and force than larger supplications, having much spirit, as it were, contracted into them; and they would, no doubt, if used, be answered with frequent beams of God's countenance returned to the soul, as it were in exchange. For though whole lifetimes of prayer are not worthy the least of those, yet it pleases God thus to keep intercourse with those souls that love him, and for the ejaculations of their desires to him, looks back on them, and so they interchange as it were sudden glances of love that answer one another. The Lord is pleased to speak thus himself, and the souls that know this love understand it: *Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, with one of thine eyes*. Cant. iv. 9. But though such looks and ejaculations will refresh a soul inflamed with the love of God, yet it suffices not: they must have times of larger and more secret converse with their beloved, and particularly in the exercise of solemn, continued prayer; and, if cut short of it at any time, they will miss it as much as a healthful body its accustomed repast.

But it would seem, that though there may be some reason for confession and thanksgiving, yet, that which hath most peculiarly the name of prayer—petition—is superfluous: he who knows our wants better than ourselves, and what is fittest to bestow upon us, and forgets not all, what need we put him in mind, and follow him with so many suits?

This, indeed, is a strong reason against vain babblings in prayer, and imagining to be heard merely for long continuance and multitude of words; and our Savior himself doth here use it so, ver. 8; but withal he shows us clearly, that it makes nothing against the exercise of prayer, in that he adds immediately upon these words, *After this manner, therefore, pray ye*.

Although the Lord knows well our wants, and doth according to his own good pleasure, yet there is for prayer, 1. *Duty*. 2. *Dignity*. 3. *Utility*.

1. *Duty*. We owe this homage to God, not only to worship him, but particularly to offer up our supplications, and to acknowledge him our king and ruler of the whole world, and to testify our dependance upon him, as the giver of every good gift. It is not because he is unwilling and loath to give, for *He gives liberally and upbraids none;* yet, says the apostle there, *If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it*. James i. 5. So, of all wants, that which thanksgiving doth acknowledge after receipt, supplication doth beforehand; his power, and truth, and goodness, &c. This is his name still, the God who *heareth prayer*, and therefore this homage is due to him, *To him shall all flesh come*. Ps. lxv. 2.

2. *Dignity*. This is the honor of the saints, that they are admitted to so near and frequent converse with the great God, that they do not only expect from him, but may so frequently speak to him of their desires and wants, and may pour out their complaints into his bosom. Abraham is sensible of the greatness of this privilege, by reflecting upon the greatness of his distance. Gen. xviii. 27. *Behold, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes*. It is an unspeakable honor for dust and ashes to be received into such familiarity with the Lord of heaven and earth.

3. *Utility*. [1.] It quiets and eases the heart when it is troubled, to vent itself to God. As there is some natural ease in sighs and tears (for otherwise nature should not have been furnished with them, nor teach us to use them), they discharge some part of grief, though addressed no whither, but only let out; but more when it is in the presence of some entire friend; so they must be most of all easing, when they are directed to God in prayer. *Cor serenat et purgat oratio, capaciusque efficit ad excipienda divina munera:* "Prayer," says Augustine, "calms and purifies the heart, and renders it more capable of the Divine benefits." *Mine eye poureth forth tears unto God* says Job, Job xvi. 20; and

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David, *My sighing is not hid from thee.* Ps. xxxviii. 9. *Cast thy burden on the Lord,* says the psalmist. Psalm lv. 22. The Lord calls for our burdens, would not have us wrestle with them ourselves, but roll them over on him. Now, the desires that are breathed forth in prayer, are, as it were, the very unloading of the heart: each request that goes forth, carries out somewhat of the burden with it, and lays it on God. Phil. iv. 6. *Be careful in nothing,* says the apostle: that were a pleasant life indeed, if it might be; but how shall that be attained? Why, this is the only way, says he, *In all things make your requests known unto God.* Tell him what are your desires, and leave them there with him, and so you are sure to be rid of all further disquieting care of them. Try as many ways as you will, there is no other will free you, in difficulties, of all perplexing thoughts, but this, and this will do it.

[2.] In it the graces of the Spirit are exercised, and they gain by that, as all habits do; they are strengthened and increased by acting. Faith, in believing the promises; and that is the very basis of prayer: it can not subsist without the support of faith. And hope is raised up and set on tiptoe, ἀποκαραδοκεῖν, to look out for accomplishment. And love, it is that which delights it, to impart its mind to him on whom it is set, and thus to entertain converse and conference with him, and all hours seem short to it that are thus spent; and by this it still rises to a higher flame, it is blown and stirred by prayer. The more the soul converses with God, doubtless the more it loves him.

And this speaking your desires to God in prayer, makes the heart still more holy, invites it to entertain new desires, but such as it may confidently acquaint God withal.

[3.] In relation to the particular things desired, it not only fits and disposes the heart for receiving them as blessings, but withal it is a real means of obtainment, by reason of God's own appointment, and of his promise. He hath bound himself by his promises not to disregard the prayers of his people. *His ear is open to their cry,* says the psalmist, Psalm xxxiv. 15. And the many instances in Scripture, and the experience of the church in all ages, bear witness to the truth of these promises. Imminent judgments have been averted, great armies conquered,* and the very course of nature countermanded, the sun arrested, by the power of prayer. Moses's hands only held up to heaven, routed the Amalekites more than all the swords that were drawn against them.

The goodness of God is expressed in his promises; and these promises encourage prayer; and prayer is answered with performance; and thanksgiving returns the performance in praise to God. Psalm l. 15. So, all ends where it began, in him who is *the Alpha and the Omega,* the Beginning and the End of all things.

If you would be rich in all grace, be much in prayer. Conversing with God assimilates the soul to him, beautifies it with the beams of his holiness, as Moses's face shined when he returned from the mount. It is prayer, that brings all our supplies from heaven; as the virtuous woman is said, Prov. xxxi. 14, to be *like the merchant's ships, she bringeth her food from afar.* Prayer draws more grace out of God's hand, and subdues sin and the powers of darkness: it entertains and augments our friendship with God, raiseth the soul from earth, and purifies it wonderfully. Their experience, who have any of this kind, teacheth them, that, as they abate in prayer, all their graces do sensibly weaken. Therefore, when the apostle hath suited a Christian with his *whole armor,* he adds this to all, *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.* Eph. vi. 18. For this arms man and his armor both, with the strength and protection of God: *Armatura armaturæ oratio.*

II. The form prescribed: *After this manner.*

They who know anything of their own wants and poverty, and of the bounty and fulness of God, can not doubt of the continual usefulness of prayer: and they who are sensible of their own unskilfulness, will acknowledge, that, as prayer is necessary, so there is necessity of a direction how to perform it. The disciples found this in themselves, when they said, *Lord, teach us to pray,* as St. Luke hath it, where he records this prayer. And our Savior here marks the errors of hypocrisy and babbling in prayer, which are so incident to men, and teacheth his disciples, *After this manner, therefore, pray ye.*

As for prescribing forms of prayer in general, to be bound to their continual use in private or in public, is nowhere practised. Nor is there, I conceive, on the other side, anything in the word of God, or any solid reason drawn from the word, to condemn their use.

There is, indeed, that inconvenience observable in their much use, and leaning on them, that they easily turn to coldness and formality; and yet, to speak the truth of this, it is rather imputable to our dulness and want of affection in spiritual things, than to the forms of prayer that are used. For whereas some may account it much spiritualness to despise what they have heard before, and to desire continual variety in prayer, it seems rather to be want of spiritualness that makes that needful, for that we find not our affections lively in that holy exercise, unless they be awaked and stirred by new expressions; whereas, the soul that is earnest on the thing itself for itself, panting after the grace of God and the pardon of sin, regards not in what terms it be uttered, whether new or old; yea, though it be in those words it hath heard and uttered a hundred times, yet

* In Aurelius's time, the legion of the Christians was called Κεραυνοβόλος, the thundering legion.

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still it is new to a spiritual mind. And surely the desires that do move in that constant way, have more evidence of sincerity and true vigor in them, than those that depend upon new notions and words to move them, and can not stir without them. It may be, that it is no other than a false flash of temporary devotion that arises in a man's heart, which comes by the power of some moving strain of prayer that is new. But when confessions of sin, and requests of pardon, though in never so low and accustomed terms, carry his heart along with them heavenward, it is then more sure that the Spirit of God dwelling in him, and the sense of the things themselves, the esteem of the blood of Christ and the favor of God, do move the heart, and there is no novelty of words to help it. So, then, though the Lord bestows rich gifts upon some of his servants, for his own glory and the good of his church, yet we should beware that in fancying continual variety in prayer, there be not more of the flesh than of the spirit, and the head working more than the heart. It is remarkable, that, as they that search those things observe, the words of this prayer are (divers of them) such as come near the words of such petitions as were usual among the Jews, though He in whom was all fulness and wisdom, was not scarce of matter and words; so little was novelty and variety considerable in prayer, in his esteem. Mistake it not; the Spirit of prayer hath not his seat in the invention, but in the affection. In this many deceive themselves, in that they think the work of this Spirit of prayer to be mainly in furnishing new supplies of thoughts and words: no, it is mainly in exciting the heart anew at times of prayer, to break forth itself in ardent desires to God, whatsoever the words be, whether new or old, yea, possibly without words; and then most powerful when it words it least, but vents in sighs and groans that can not be expressed. Our Lord understands the language of these perfectly, and likes it best: he knows and approves the meaning of his own Spirit, and looks not to the outward appearance, the shell of words, as men do. Rom. viii. 26, 27.

But, to speak particularly of this form that is above all exception, it is given us as the pattern and model of all our prayers, and the closer they keep to it, the nearer they resemble it, they are the more approvable. It is a wonder, then, how any can scruple the use of this prayer itself. For, if other prayers are to be squared by it, what forbids to use that which is the square, and therefore perfectest? If they be good by conformity to it, itself must be better. The mumbling of it over without understanding and affection, is indeed no other than a gross abuse of it, and taking of the name of God in vain, as all other lifeless prayer is. And this is not only the popish abuse of it, but too much our own; for when we do not both understand and attentively mind what we say, it is all one to us, though in our own tongue, as if, with them, we said it in an unknown language. It is a foolish, superstitious conceit, to imagine that the rattling over these words is sufficient for prayer; but it is, on the other side, a weak, groundless scruple, to doubt that the use of it, with spiritual affection, is both lawful and commendable.

Οὕτως.] It is a particle both for the *matter* and the *manner* of prayer.

1. The *matter*. This may be our rule, that whatsoever we can not reduce to some part of this prayer, as contained under it, should be no part of ours. If we take not heed to this, we may abuse the throne of God with undue and unworthy suits, and ask those things that it were a punishment to give us. Therefore, Plato chose well that word, *Give us what is good for us, whether we ask it or not; and what is evil give us not, though we should desire it.* Not to speak now particularly, we see in the matter of this prayer in general, that spiritual things are to be the main of all our prayers; and, in things temporal, not to lodge superfluous, inordinate desires, but in a moderate use to seek things necessary.

2. For the *manner*. Observe [1.] The *order* of this prayer, that the soul put itself in the sight of God, and him in its own sight, beginning, as here, with due thoughts of the majesty of God, to whom we pray. And this is of very great consequence: but more of this hereafter.

[2.] That the glory of God is wholly preferred to all our own contentment of what kind soever: that is to be the first-born and strength of all our desires; and all that we seek for ourselves, must be in relation to that his glory, directed to it as our highest scope. And because we are naturally full of self-love, and our hearts are carried by it toward our own interest, and will be ready to start aside like deceitful bows, and slip us in our aiming at that mark; therefore, there be three several petitions, all of that strain, to make them steady and fixed toward it, to desire in all things, and above all things, that our God may be glorified.

[3.] *Brevity;* opposed to that babbling which our Savior reproves and particularly corrects by this form. The fault he lays on the heathen, not upon the Jews, for they blamed it too, and their doctors spake against it, alleging that place that is very pertinent, Eccl. v. 2, where he argues from our exceeding distance and the greatness of God, because men use not to entertain great persons with long, empty discourses. Know then, before whom thou art in prayer, and have so much respect to the majesty of God, as not to multiply idle repetitions, such as wise men can not well endure; how much less the all-wise God! Βαττολογία and πολυλογία are here put as one, because the one is the consequent of the other: where there is much speaking, there will be vain speaking and empty repe-

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titions.* *In multitude of words there wanteth not sin*, says Solomon, Prov. x. 19. And we see it, that they who lay a necessity upon themselves of a long continuance and many words in prayer, as if it were otherwise no prayer at all, they fall into this inconvenience of idle repeating; and this is most unbeseeming our access to the majesty of God, as if there were some defect either in his knowledge, or in his attention or affection to those that seek him. Therefore, though this was the common fault of the heathen, yet some even of them had so much discerning as to condemn this folly, and inveigh against it, acknowledging both the wisdom of God and his love to mankind, and that he understands far better what is fit for us, than we ourselves, and therefore was not to be dishonored with idle tediousness in prayer.†

But is, then, all length and much continuance in prayer, and all redoubling of the same request, reprovable? Surely not. Were there nothing else to persuade us of this, our Savior's own practice were sufficient, who prescribed this rule, and yet is found to have spent whole nights in prayer, and to have iterated the same request; and doubtless (which can be said of no other), his example is as perfect a rule as his doctrine.

This, then, briefly, is the fault here: when the long continuance and much repetition in prayer, is affected as a thing of itself available; when heaping on words, and beating often over the same words, though the heart bear them not company, is judged to be prayer; and generally, whensoever the tongue outruns the affection, then is prayer turned into babbling. Yea, though a man use this very short form here prescribed, yet he may commit this very fault against which it was provided, he may babble in saying it; and it is to be feared, the greatest part do so. Men judge, and that rightly, a speech to be long or short, not so much by the quantity of words, as by the sense; so that a very short speech that is empty of sense, may be called long, and a long one that is full, and hath nothing impertinent, is truly short.‡ Thus, as men judge by the sense of speech, God judgeth by the affection of prayer, which is the true sense of it; so, the quality is the rule of the quantity with him. There is no prayer too long to him, provided it be all enlivened with affection: no idle repetition, where the heart says every word over again as often, and more often than the tongue. Therefore, those repetitions in the Psalms, *Lord, hear, Lord, incline thine ear, Lord, attend*, &c., were not idle on this account; God's own Spirit did dictate them, there was not one of them empty, but came from the heart of the holy penmen, full fraught with the vehemency of their affections. And it is reported of St. Augustine, that he prayed over for a whole night, *Noverim te, Domine, noverim me:* because his heart still followed the suit, all of it was prayer. So that in truth where the matter is new, and the words still diverse and very rich in sense, yet, with God, it may be idle multiplying of words, because the heart stays behind; and where the same words are repeated, so that a man seems poor and mean in the gift of prayer to others, yet, if it be not defect of affection, but the abundance of it, as it may be, that moves often the same request, it is not empty, but full of that sense that the Searcher of hearts alone can read. I had rather share with that *publican* in his own words, and say it often over, as if I had nothing else to say, *God be be merciful to me a sinner*, saying it with such a heart, than the most excellent prayer where the outside is the better half.

So, then, this is the mistake of men, to think to make words pass for prayer with God, and to make up what is wanting inwardly with multitude of words and long continuance: a foolish compensation, that will no way satisfy him who says, Above all, *my son, give me thy heart;* and no length nor words can supply the want of that with him. Yet, many do thus; they give large measure of that which is altogether worth nothing. As the orator said of those that make a poor speech pass for something, by crying it out with a loud voice, *that they were like to those cripples who got a horseback to hide their halting;* it is thus here. And the church of Rome hath it for their common shift; they have shut the heart out of this employment, where it hath most interest, by praying in an unknown tongue; and this defect they make up with long continuance, and repetition of *paternosters*, with a devotion as cold and dead as the beads they drop. And so they with their breviaries, notwithstanding their name, fall directly into this foolish, heathenish vanity of idle length and repetitions.

Thus do we too, though we speak our own known language, when either in secret or in public we suffer our hearts to rove in prayer, and hear not ourselves what we are praying: how then can we expect that God should hear us?

If the affection can be brought to continue in it, prayer in secret can not be too long. But let us not think it virtue enough that it is long, let it rather be brief with strong bent of mind, than long without it;* as a small body strong and full of spirits, is much better than the greatest bulk that is dull and spiritless. And when we pray in company, because men can not know the temper of other men's hearts.

* Χωρὶς τὸ τ' εἰπεῖν πολλὰ καὶ τὰ καίρια.—SOPHOCLES.

† *Paucis verbis rem divinam facito.*

‡ *Absit ut multiloquium deputem, quando necessaria dicuntur, quantâlibet sermonum multitudine ac prolixitate dicantur. Brevitas est etiam in longissimâ oratione, cui nihil inest alieni.*

* *Non est (ut quidam putant) orare in multiloquio, ac diutius oretur, aliud est sermo multus aliud diuturnus affectus. Absit multo loquutio, sed non desit multa precatio.*—AUGUSTINE.

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usually a convenient medium between the extremes of briefness and length, seems most suitable.

But, alas! how few be there who keep constant watch over their affections in prayer, and endeavor to keep the heart bent to it throughout! Oh, how much sin is committed by us this way that we observe not!

This is a great lesson, and requires still our diligence, even all our lifetime, to learn it better and better, how to pray.

We have here indeed a complete copy, but we can not follow it. He who set it us, must put his Spirit within us, to lead our hand and heart that we may follow it, as he here shows how we should pray. We are not born with this heart *fimus oratores.* And I may add other the word, true of us, in regard of our vanity of mind, and the devices that arise in it. *nascimur poetæ. Omnis fictio cordis,* Every *fiction* of the heart, &c., Gen. vi. 5. We must have that Spirit of his, the Spirit of prayer, to teach us effectually, and make us learn this divine art of prayer, according to his rules. Although we are thus externally taught by our Savior's doctrines, yet unless we be taught within by the Spirit, we are never the nearer; we know neither what to ask, nor how to ask. But that is a happy supply, and they may rejoice in it who have it, the Spirit of God *helping their infirmities, and making intercession for them.* Rom. viii. 26. How should they but speed in their suits with God, who have both his own Spirit interceding, by framing and inditing their petitions, and his own Son interceding at his right hand by his merits!

*He that follows me,* says our Savior, *shall not walk in darkness.* John viii. 12. It is safest, in all our ways, to be led by him, particularly in our access to the Father by prayer. He leads us in by his intercession. *Through him we have* [προσαγωγὴν] *access,* or rather *adduction.* Eph. ii. 18. He takes us by the hand to bring us to the throne of grace, gives us his Spirit to frame our minds, and teach us with what disposition to pray. Here he leads us, by putting words in our mouths, and furnishing us what to say. Consider,

I. The preface or compellation. II. The petitions. III. The conclusion.

By the preface, we are in general taught this, ere we consider particularly the words of it: 1. To endeavor to have right thoughts and apprehensions of God, on whom we call. 2. At our entry or beginning to pray, to set ourselves before him, and him before our own sight; to have the eye of our mind set on that Deity we worship. This would do much to the curing of that common disease of our prayers, the wandering and roving of our minds: an evil that they can not but be sensible of, and often bewail, who take any notice of their own inward carriage with God, who trace their own hearts, and ask account of their behavior in prayer.* Oh, light, inconstant hearts! may they say: as the Latin reads that, Psalm xl. 12. *Cor meum dereliquit me.* How many regard them not at all! But they who do, find it their ordinary trick to give them the slip. And this is one great cause of our wanderings, that we do not, at our entrance to prayer, compose ourselves to due thoughts of God, and set ourselves in his presence: this would do much to awe us, and ballast our minds, that they tumble not to and fro, as is their custom. There be not many that do, but it would prove no doubt much help, would we task ourselves to this, never to open our mouths to God, till the eye of our soul were fixed upon him, and taken up with the considering of his presence. But of this more when we come to those words, *Who art in heaven.*

*Our Father which art in heaven.*] *Our Father*—the mercy of God is in this, to beget in us the confidence of faith; in the other, *Which art in heaven,* the majesty of God to work us to reverence: though there is somewhat in the word *Father,* likewise, to persuade reverence, and something in the other that confirms faith (but more of this hereafter); yet, if we take that which appears most, and is predominant, the former mainly supports faith, and the latter begets humility.

The frame of it is extensive; not *My Father,* but *our Father,* and so throughout. Besides that it was a pattern both for public and private prayer, and so it was fittest to run in the larger and public style, it doth, no doubt, as all have taken it, teach the charitable extension of our prayers, where they are most private, to take in with our own the good of others, and when we are busiest and most particularly dealing for ourselves, yet, not to shut out our brethren. Let the place and performance of secret prayer be as private as may be, but the strain and supplications public, as well as personal. The most private prayer of the godly is a public good, and he loses nothing by that; for, besides that his particular interest is not hindered by taking in others, he hath this gain, that by the same reason he likewise hath a share in all the prayers of others. And this (though little considered by the most) is one point, and not a small one, but a very profitable and comfortable point of that article of our faith. *The communion of saints,* that every believer hath a share in all the prayers of all the rest: he is partner in every ship of that kind that sets to sea, and hath a portion of all their gainful voyages.

But he that in prayer minds none but himself, doubtless he is not right in minding himself. Howsoever, this he may be sure of, that in keeping out others from his prayers, he bars himself from the benefit of all others' prayers likewise. *Si pro te solo oras, pro te solus oras:* If thou prayest for thyself alone, thou alone prayest for thyself, says St. Ambrose. So that self-love itself may here

* Nihil est in nobis corde fugacius. GREGORY.

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plead for love to our brethren. Forget not the church of God, and to seek the good of Zion, it is not only your duty, but your benefit. Are you not all concerned in it, if indeed you be parts of that mystical body? And it hinders not at all, but rather advances your personal suits at God's hands, when he sees your love to your brethren, and desires for the church's good. Let not, therefore, any estate, no private perplexity or distress, nor very sorrow for sin, take you so up, as to be all for yourselves: let others, but especially the public condition of the church of God, find room with you. We find it thus with David; when he was lamenting his own case, Psalm li. 18, and Psalm xxv. ult., and elsewhere he forgets not the church: *In thy good pleasure do good to Zion, and build up the walls of Jerusalem.* So then, let this be the constant tenor of your prayers, even in secret. When thou prayest alone, *shut thy door,* says our Savior here, shut out as much as thou canst the sight and notice of others, but shut not out the interest and good of others; say, *Our Father:* as the heathen call their God, Ζεῦ Πάτερ.

*Father.*] He is indeed our Father (Τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμεν, Acts xvii. 28), as the author of our being, beyond all the visible creatures. He breathed upon man *the breath of life.* But the privilege of this our natural relation, the sin of our nature hath made fruitless and comfortless to us, till we be restored by grace, and made partakers of a new sonship: we are indeed the workmanship of God, but, being defaced by sin, and considered in that estate, our true name is, *children of wrath.*

But the sonship that emboldens us to draw near unto God as our Father, is derived from his only begotten Son. He became the son of man, to make us anew the sons of God. Being thus restored, we may indeed look back upon our creation, and draw out of it, to use in prayer with God, that we are his creatures, the workmanship of his hands, and he in that sense *our Father.* But, by reason of our rebellion, t is argument is not strong enough alone, bu must be supported with this other, as the main ground of our comfort, that wherein the strength of our confidence lies, that he is *our Father* in his Son Christ; that by faith we are invested into a new sonship, and by virtue of that may call him *Father,* and move him by that name to help and answer us. John i. 12. *To as many as received him, he gave power to become the sons of God.* Our adoption holds in Jesus Christ as the head of this fraternity; therefore he says, *I go to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.* John xx. 17. He says not, To our Father and our God, but severally, *mine* and *yours;* teaching us the order of the new covenant, that the sonship of Jesus Christ is not only more eminent in nature, but in order, is the spring and cause of ours, as St. Cyril well observes. So then, he that here puts this word in our mouths, to call God *Father,* he it is by whom we have this dignity and comfort that we call him so.

But this adoption is accompanied (that we think it not a naked, external name) with a real change, and so great a change that it bears the name of that which is the real ground of sonship; it is called *regeneration.* And these are inseparable. There be no sons of God by *adoption,* but such as are withal his sons by *regeneration* and *new birth.* There is a new life breathed into them from God. He is not only the *Father of Spirits,* by their first infusion into the body, and enlivening it by them, but by this new infusion of grace into the souls of men (as it seems to signify there, Heb. xii. 9, where he is speaking of spiritual sons), and enlivening them by it, which were dead without it, as the body is without them. And the Spirit of God renewing them, is the *Spirit of adoption, by which they cry, Abba Father.* Rom. viii. 15. He gives them a supernatural life by this Spirit sent into their hearts; and the Spirit, by that regeneration which he works, ascertains them of that adoption which is in Christ Jesus; and in the persuasion of both, they call upon God as their Father.

So then, you who would have this confidence in approaching to God, to call him Father, lay hold on Jesus Christ, as the fountain of sonship. Offer not to come unto God but through *him,* and rest not satisfied with yourselves, nor your prayers, till you find some evidence that you are in *him.* And know, that there is no evidence of your portion in the Son, but by the Spirit; therefore called the *Spirit of the Son, by which we call God Father.* Gal. iv. 6. See whether the Spirit of God dwells and rules in your hearts. For *they that have not the Spirit of God, are none of his,* says the apostle: but, in the same chapter, he assures you, that *As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are* undoubtedly *the sons of God,* Rom. viii. 9, 14. If you then call on the name of God, and particularly by this name, *Our Father,* depart from iniquity. Be ashamed to pretend to be his sons, and yet be so unlike him, wallowing in sin: it can not be, that the sons of so holy a God can be altogether unholy, and delight to be so: no, though they can not be perfectly free from impurity, yet, they who are indeed his children, do certainly hate impurity, because he hates it.

Do you draw near unto God in his Son Christ? Do you give yourselves up to be *led by his Spirit?* Then you may account and call him *your Father.* And if you may use this word, there is abundance of sweetness in it: it is a spring of comfort that can not run dry. And it hath influence into all the petitions; as likewise the other word, *which art in heaven;* Thou who art so great and so good. Whose name and whose kingdom should we desire to be advanced so much as our own Father's, our heavenly Father? And

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whose wil to be obeyed on earth as it is in heaven? Of whom should we seek our daily bread, but of our Father? And especially, so rich a Father, possessor of heaven and earth! And forgiveness we may ask of our gracious Father, and conduct, and protection. In the hardest condition that can befall you, ye may come to your Father: all the world can not bar your access. And there is no child may go to his father with any suit, with more confidence than you may to your Father; and if there be mercy and power enough in God, thou canst not miss of help. He hath the bowels of a Father. Psalm ciii. 13. Yea, says our Savior, *Can you that are evil give your children good things? How much more will your heavenly Father give good things to them who ask him!* Matt. vii. 11. The love of parents to their children, they have from him: He hath given it to nature, so, it is but a drop to the ocean of fatherly love that is in himself. *Ante petitionem magnum accepimus, ut possimus dicere, pater: quid enim jam non det filiis petentibus pater, qui jam hoc ipsum dedit ut essent filii?* [Augustine.] Let not, then, unworthiness scare his children. Parents love their children, and do them good, not because they see they are more worthy than others, for it may be far otherwise, but because they are their own.

Yea, though we have run astray from him, and forgotten very far the duty of children, yet he can not forget the love of a Father; and our best is, to return to him. It can not be well with us, so long as we go any whither else. The prodigal found it so, and therefore, though he was convinced of that, that he was *unworthy to be called his son*, yet he resolves to return, *I will go to my father.* Yea, though to thy sense he should seem to reject thee, yet, let not go this hold. If thou hast but a desire to believe in him and love him, though thou canst find no more, and even while thou doubtest whether he is thy Father or no, yet, press him with the name, call him *Father*, speak to him as thy Father; Jesus, his Son, in whom he is *well pleased*, doth warrant thee. *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him*, says Job: so resolve thou, though thou sawest his hand, as it were, ready to throw thee into hell, yet, cry to him still, and use this very name, *Father, reject me not.* Never any perished with such a purpose.

*Who art in heaven.*]

*Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling*, Psalm ii. 11. This compellation taken together, and rightly understood, works that due temper of prayer, the mixture of these two, *joy*, and *fear*, *confidence* and *reverence*. There was some such thing spoken of Augustus, but it is most true of the Divine Majesty, that they who dare speak rashly to him, know not his greatness, and they who dare not speak to him, provided it be with due reverence and respect, know not his goodness.

That we all invoke one Father, teaches that new law of love to one another, which our Savior, the author of this prayer, so often recommends, and makes the very badge of his disciples. It serves to comfort the meanest, and to abate the loftiness of the greatest who pray thus, as St. Augustine well observes, that they all meet and agree in this: the greatest kings, and their meanest subjects, all must speak to God as their Father, not only all alike having their being from him as *the Father of the spirits of all flesh*, but the same adoption belonging unto all, high and low, that are believers. All the pomp and command and pleasures of princes can not make them happy without this grace of adoption; and no outward baseness prejudges any, but they may be happy by partaking of it. In this, likewise, is very clear our lesson of love to God, because our Father. For though (as they say) love doth descend much more than it ascends, and it is here most of all verified, yet it doth ascend from the children to their parents by way of reflection, especially from the sons of God to him as a Father, who is love itself. And as this name draws the soul to the throne of grace with assured expectation of mercy, so it commands withal (as we said), honor and reverence; especially, being accompanied with this other word that mainly enforces that [ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς,] *In the heavens;* answering the Hebrew word, which is plural, and signifying that the glorious God is above all the visible heavens. And thus the profane authors speak of God likewise, ὑπέρτατα δώματα νεῶν.

We know, although we are guilty of much forgetting it, that the Lord is everywhere present, neither excluded nor included anywhere; that he fills all places, not as contained in them, but as containing them, and upholding them, and all things in them. But he is *in heaven* after a special manner, in the brightest manifestion of himself, and as the purest service is performed to him there. They can not contain him, as Solomon expresses it, 1 Kings viii. 27; yet, his throne is there, there he dwells, as in his principal palace, in greatest majesty, as David teacheth us, Psalm xi. 4, and often elsewhere. But that he is not shut up there, and regardless of things below, we learn in that same place; for he adds, *His eyes behold, and his eyelids try the children of men.*

This is added first, for *distinction.* As the apostle differencing him, from the fathers of our flesh, Heb. xii. 9, calls him, *The Father of Spirits*, so here to distinguish him from earthly fathers, he is styled, *Our heavenly Father.*

*Observe.* We can not here know God according to what he is in himself, and therefore he is described to our capacity, and to our profit, so as we are able, and as it most concerns us to know him here; by his gracious relation to us as *our Father*, and by the excellency of his dwelling, as a sign of his greatness, that he is *in heaven;* both which



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are extrinsical to his essence. But thus we may learn thus much, to worship and love him, as the best and the greatest, infinitely exceeding all that we can conceive of him.

As it is for *distinction*, so, it is such a word of difference as is of excellent use.

1. To make the soul humble and reverend in approaching to God in prayer. If we consider it, shall we not be wary how we behave ourselves in the presence of so great a king? It is very strange, that our souls should not be possessed with the deepest lowliness and self-abasement in the sight of God; worms in the dust before the majesty that dwells in heaven. This Solomon expresses: *He is in heaven, and thou on earth, therefore let thy words be few.* What is this we find in ourselves, that makes us so drunk with self-conceit, not only in converse one with another, but with God? Surely, we know him not; at least, we consider not who he is, and where he dwells, and who we are, and where we dwell. Surely, it would lay us low, if when we come before God, we would consider him as the most glorious king, sitting on his throne, and compassed with glorious spirits, who offer him spotless praises, and we ourselves coming before him, as base frogs creeping out of our pond, where we dwell amidst the mire of sinful pollutions.

Thus, indeed, his highness should humble us in coming, but it should not affright us from coming before him; for though he is in heaven and we on earth, yet, he is *our Father.* Thus ought we to join these two, and to behold them jointly, that we may have that right posture of mind by them which suits with prayer—*humble boldness.*

There may be undue distrust, but there can not be too much humility of spirit, in prayer. The more humble, the fitter to come to God; and he the more willing to come into the soul, and dwell in it. For that is the other house that he hath chosen. They seem very ill suited together: if the highest heavens be the Lord's own dwelling, it would seem fit that the other should be the richest palaces on earth, or stately-built temples. No, the other is such a one as we most despise, but God prefers before all other, even the most sumptuous building. Isa. lvii. 15. *Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also* (a strange *also!*) *that is of a broken and humble spirit.* The highest heavens are the habitation of his glory, and the humble heart hath the next honor, to be the habitation of his grace.

2. As the word humbles the soul in God's sight, so it elevates it to heaven where God dwells, and fixes it there in prayer. And this elevation is not contrary to humility: the soul that is laid lowest in itself, is most sublime in converse with God, *Sublimiter humilis et humiliter sublimis.* [CYPRIAN.] And thus ought our hearts to ascend in prayer, which, alas, we usually suffer to lag and draw the wing heavily on the earth. *Unto thee, O Lord,* says the psalmist, *do I lift up my soul.* Psalm xxv. 1. That is the right and natural motion of prayer. But there is another lifting up that our souls are better acquainted with, which is spoken of in the psalm immediately foregoing, the *lifting up of the soul unto vanity;* and the more so lift up, the farther off from God. O the vainness of our hearts? And how hard is it to establish them on him who dwells on high! Even while we are speaking to him, we suffer them to break loose and rove, and to entertain foolish thoughts. We would not use a king or great person so, nor any man whom we respect, when we are speaking to him seriously, to intermix impertinences, and forget what we are a saying. But we dare offer gross nonsense to the all-wise God: though the words go on in good sense, yet the prayer is so to him, when the heart intermixes vain thoughts —*Polum terræ miscet,* confuses and spoils all. And this is the great task as we have said, to bring the heart before God, to set it on his holy mountain in heaven, while we pray (it should be so certainly), and leave servile, earthly thoughts at the foot of the mount.

3. It gives confidence. [1.] Of the power of God, his rich ability to grant all our requests. He, that Lord of all, and as greatest possessor, hath his throne in the highest heavens, and doth what pleaseth him in heaven and in earth; this, with the other completes our comfort: *good-will* and *power* —*our Father in heaven.* And this we may apply to all our wants, for assurance of supply, and to all our enemies, and the church's enemies, that our prayer shall be heard for their foil and disappointment. *He sits in heaven and laughs.* Psalm ii. 4. They rage, and tumult, and consult; a great bustle and noise they keep; and he sits and laughs at them. He scorns all their proud attempts, for that with ease he can scatter them in a moment: one word of his mouth overturns them and all their contrivances.

[2.] It is a confirmation of our portion in heaven. If he who is in heaven be *our Father,* then, our inheritance lies there, in that land of peace where it can not be lost or impaired, and he will bring his children to the possession of it. To be the sons of God, is not a style without an estate, an empty title. No, he who makes us sons, makes us heirs likewise: *sons,* we are, *in Christ,* and *co-heirs with Christ.* Rom. viii. 17. He came down to earth for this purpose, to make a new purchase of heaven for us; and he is returned thither to prepare it for us. *I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, ye may be also.* John xiv. 2.

*Hallowed be thy name.*] The sense many wants and necessities, drives a Christian daily to God in prayer; yet, certainly, that which draws him most strongly to it, is of higher nature, the sense of his duty to God and the delight he hath to do that homage

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and honor to him. And therefore, in prayer, the main current of his heart runs that way, and so agrees with this pattern given us by our Savior; wherein we see clearly, that our prime desires are to be bestowed on the glory of God. And that is placed first, not only as it is to be preferred before all other suits, but as it is to be regarded still in all the rest, and they all referred to it. And to make the impression of this desire the deeper on our hearts, and to give the fuller vent of it in expression to them who have it, there are, you see, three of these six petitions spent on it. This is the first of them, *Hallowed be thy name.* This suits well with the style here given to God *Our Father. If I be a Father, where is my honor?* says the Lord by his prophet, Mal i. 6. And here, his children are taught to join these two together: Thou art *our Father*, and so glorious a Father, *dwelling in heaven;* therefore our desire is that thou mayest have honor, that *thy name may be hallowed*, and *Thy kingdom come.* We will inquire,

1. What is meant by his name. 2. What is the hallowing or sanctifying of it. 3. What the petition itself is.

1. Briefly his name is, Himself, as he is made known to us, and conceivable by us, and differenced from all other beings, as men are by their names one from another. For to this purpose are all these several names and attributes given him, which we find in scripture, that we may so conceive of himself as here we are capable.

2. To sanctify his name, we know, can not be to infuse holiness into it, or effectually to make it holy; for neither can we so make anything holy, nor can the name of God be so made holy, for it is most holy of itself, yea, he is holiness itself, and the fountain of all holiness. But according to the double sense of the word *blessing* as mutual between God and man, so is this of *sanctifying. Blessed*, says the apostle, *be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings.* Eph. i. 3. His *benedicere*, is *benefacere.* He blesseth us really, as the giver of all blessings and of blessedness itself: and our blessing him is no other than the acknowledging of this, that it is he who blesseth us, and praising him for it. Thus he sanctifies us, makes us holy, purifies us by his Spirit from our natural unholiness and filthiness according to his promise (Ezek. xxxvi. 25), and according to our Savior's prayer (John xvii. 17); and we sanctify the Lord and his name (as here, and Isaiah viii. 13), when we know and acknowledge that he is holy, and use his name holily. And thus, they only sanctify, who affectionately pray thus, that his name may be sanctified, whose hearts he hath first sanctified and made them holy.

More particularly and distinctly, the sanctifying of God's name hath in it these things. [1.] To have right thoughts of the holiness and majesty of God. [2.] That, upon so conceiving of him, our hearts be reverently affected toward him. [3.] Not only to have that due apprehension and reverence of his holiness in the habit, and so let it lie dead within us, but often to stir up ourselves to the remembrance and consideration of it, to call in our thoughts to act about it: so, this will increase our knowledge and reverence (as all habits grow by acting), and will excite the soul to praise him, as the psalmist speaks, *Give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.* [4.] The declaring and extolling of his holiness, speaking upon all seasonable occasions, honorably of his name. [5.] The humble sense and acknowledgment of our own unholiness in his presence: and therefore, all those lowly confessions of sins and of their own unworthiness, that we find in the prayers of the prophets, are so many hallowings of the name of God, giving the glory of holiness to him alone, and taking the shame of their own pollutions. Thus, Dan. ix., Isa. lxiv., &c. As some of the Americans have a custom, when they appear before their king, to put on their worst apparel, that all the magnificence may rest on him alone, and appear the better; thus, though the majesty of God, in itself being infinite, needs nothing else to commend it, yet, to our apprehension of it, it may be thus, and the saints in desire of his glory may intend this, to set off the lustre of his purity and excellency in the humble confessions of their own vileness: *To thee, O Lord, belongeth righteousness, but to us confusion of face.* Dan. ix. 7. [6.] The hallowing of God's name, is an earnest endeavor of conformity with him in holiness; first, in heart, that must be the principal seat of it, and then, holiness in all our words and actions, and the whole course of our lives. This is that which the Lord continually presses upon his people, *Be ye holy, for I am holy.* Lev. xix. 2, xx. 7, xxi. 8, &c. And this is the most effectual sanctifying of his name by way of declaring it holy, when his people walk in holiness. Though you tell the world that he is holy, they know him not: they can neither see him nor his holiness; but when they see that there are men, taken out of the same lump of polluted nature with themselves, and yet so renewed and changed, that they hate the defilements of the world, and do indeed live holily in the midst of a perverse generation; this may convince them that there is a brighter spring of holiness, where it is in fulness, whence these drops are, that they perceive in men; for seeing it is not in nature, there must be another principle of it, and that can be no other than this holy God. Thus is his name hallowed, and he known to be holy, by the holiness of his people.

So then, the petition takes in all, and in it we desire the sanctifying and magnifying of God's name in every possible way. 1st, by ourselves, that we may mind his glory, and

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by his grace sanctify his name. 2dly, By others, that our Lord may be more known and honored in the world. They would gladly have many hearts and many tongues brought in to confess the Lord, and his holiness and greatness. Thus the psalmist stirs up the angels to bless the Lord, Psalm ciii. 20; not that they need exciting, but to show his own affection to God's praises. 3dly, And because there is still some alloy and mixture of unholiness in all the hallowing of his name here below, all our services being stained, therefore, as the godly do, in this request, wish all the exalting and sanctifying of God's name among men that is attainable here, so, I conceive, they do, as it were applaud those purer services and praises that are given him above; and sensible how far they fall short themselves, they are glad to think that there be such multitudes of angels and glorified spirits hallowing and praising his name better and more constantly, not ceasing day nor night to cry *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.* And here they follow as they can, and give their acclamation, though in a lower key, yet as loud as they are able, *Even so, Lord, hallowed be thy name.* Now, the cause and source of their great desire of exalting and hallowing the name of God, is their love to him, which the sight that he hath given them of his excellency, hath kindled in their hearts.

After that, their chief delight is to think of him, and speak of his name. Gladly would they have him highly esteemed by all; and this is their grief, that they can find so few to bear them company and help them in this, in hallowing and extolling his name, which is so deeply engraven on their hearts. See how pathetically the psalmist repeats that again and again, Psalm cvii: *O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and his wonderful works to the children of men!* And when they hear or see anything tending to the dishonor of his name, this wounds them, and pierces them through as a sword, as the psalmist speaks, Psalm xlii. 10. They are far from envy, or an evil eye: yea, they rejoice in the gifts and graces which God bestows upon others, although it be beyond what they have themselves; for still it serves their desires, and answers what they are most earnest in: it tends to the hallowing and glorifying of the name of God. And what they have themselves, they are not in danger to grow vain upon it: rather, they wonder at the free grace of God, and extol that, and think with themselves, What am I, that he should have had compassion on me, and plucked me out of the crowd of the lost world, and given me any desire to hallow his name, while others are blaspheming it, and delighting to dishonor it! But ever the more they receive from God, they are the more humble, the more desirous of his praise, and regardless of their own. Any holiness that is in them, they know well, is from him, and therefore, all the glory of holiness must return thither, whence holiness originally comes; and the very end for which they desire increase of holiness in themselves, is to the end that they may the more hallow his name from whom they have it, and that, by the increase of their stock, there may be an increase of the tribute of praise to God.

But alas! how far are we from this mind! What hypocrisy is it, for the same mouth to utter this request, that dares profane the name of God by vain swearing! That which is *holy*, as the Hebrew word imports, is *separated* from common use (although it was not holy before), and ought not to be profaned; least of all, this name, which is not made holy by such a separation, but is primitively holy in itself; and they who use it rashly and unholily, are deeply guilty of despising the majesty of God. It is not possible that any one who is truly sensible of his greatness and holiness, can customarily abuse his name, that blessed name which he hopes to bless for ever. You say, It is your custom. It is a wonder to hear men speak thus as an excuse; it is the deepest accusation. Are not men known by their customs? Do not these discover what they are? It is your custom —what gain you by that? You must confess that it is such a one as is the custom of the children of Satan, the professed enemy of God's name; as the delight and custom of hallowing his name, is the badge of his children. It is your custom! Then know, it is his custom not to acquit them, but to make them feel the weight of his punishing hand, who dare make it a custom to dishonor his name.

Again, they who profane his holy day, they who sanctify not his name by calling on it daily in private, and generally, all who by an unsanctified life do blot the profession of Christians, what do they mean to lie so grossly, not unto men, but unto God, to his face, in praying thus, as if they desired the hallowing of his name by all, and yet, do nothing but unhallow it themselves? Think it not sufficient to the hallowing of his name, that his house and worship is purged of abuses: though they be holy, yet, unless we ourselves be holy too, we pollute all in our use of them: the worships, and sabbaths, and the name of God, our filthy hands defile all. Let us not thus provoke God, lest, in just wrath and punishment, he sanctify his own name upon us, which we profane, as he threatens against the Jews by his prophets. Ezek. xxxvi. 23.

First, then, be not satisfied to think slightly and superficially of God. Take time to consider him, and know who he is; and then you will reverence him in your thoughts. It deserves and requires all the whole heart to keep up with it; and alas! what is a heart, a narrow thing, though the largest of hearts, as Solomon's, *as large as the sand of the sea*, to an infinite God! We can find time for our earthly thoughts, and for vain foolish thoughts,

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which are good for nothing; and shall we shut out God, or think any sudden passing look enough for him!

Secondly, Behave yourselves with regard of him in his worship: ἁγιαζέτω, let holy things be done holily.

Thirdly, Honor it in your lives: especially, such as do know his name, grow daily more respective and tender of it, and be more circumspect in your actions, and, as *He who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.* 1 Pet. i. 15.

*Thy kingdom come.*] He who is the beginning of all things, must likewise of necessity be the end of them all; and then are our intentions rightest and purest, when we are most possessed with the desire of that highest end, the glory of God, and look straightest unto it. And if this purpose ought to diffuse itself through all our actions, certainly, in prayer, it should be most lively and active, because prayer is so direct and express a turning of the face of the soul unto God, and setting of its eye upon him. Therefore, this petition follows forth the same desire with the former, wishing honor to God. He is a most holy God, and the former request was for his glory in *that*, in the *sanctifying of his name.* He is a king, a great king, the greatest of all, and *this* wishes his glory in that sense, that his *kingdom* may be advanced: *Thy kingdom come.* 1. We shall inquire what his kingdom is. 2. What is the coming of it. And, 3. Shall speak of the petition itself.

1. This *kingdom* is not his universal supremacy over all the world and all the creatures in it, as being their Maker and their Preserver, and so having the highest and justest title, and the most absolute kind of dominion over all things; but his peculiar royalty over his church. By the former, he is called *King of nations*, Jer. x. 7; and by the latter, his style is *King of saints*, Rev. xv. 3. Of the former the psalmist speaks, Psalm xxiv. 1, but that which he adds, ver. 3, concerns the latter, and so on, in the Psalm, and ver. 7: *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, that the King of glory may come in.*

This kingdom is gathered and selected out of the other, and though the less in quantity, yet, in God's account, far more precious than all the rest. The church is the jewel in the ring of the world: in it he hath his peculiar residence and chief delight; as kings choose one of their palaces, and, if they have more, one of their kingdoms, to dwell in more than another. Those things that are hidden from the rest of the world concerning this King, are made known to his subjects of this his select kingdom; and it is in it that he opens up, displays after a special manner more than in all the world beside, both the glory of his majesty, and the riches of his bounty, *here*, in part, and fully *hereafter*. And according to that difference, it is distinguished into the kingdom of *grace*, and that of *glory*.

The kingdom of *grace* is to be considered, first, in the external means and administration of it; secondly, in its inward being and power. In the former sense, it is of a larger extent; but in the latter, of a more uniform nature in itself, and more conformed to its Head. The former, the kingdom of grace in its outward administration, is plainly the whole visible church; but the inward power of the kingdom of grace is only in the hearts of those who are truly sanctified, and members of the invisible church.

Jesus Christ is ordained and anointed the king and head of both, political; but of the one, natural, and therefore altogether indissoluble, not only in regard of the whole, but of each part and member of it.

The visible church is but a little parcel, a kingdom chosen out of the world; but the truly godly, who are alone the subjects of the inward kingdom of grace, are but a small part of that part, a choice part of the visible church, as *it* is a choice part of the visible world.

Now these three, the kingdom of glory, and those two kinds of the kingdom of grace, stand in this subordination: the inward kingdom of grace is the way and preparation for that of glory, and the outward kingdom of grace in the visible church, is the means and way of introducing, and establishing, and increasing the inward: so that both of them look forward to the kingdom of glory, as their utmost end, and shall terminate and end in it.

The first of these, the external or political kingdom of Christ in the visible church, consists in his absolute and supreme authority to appoint the laws of his church, and rulers by these laws. And the use of the word, and sacraments, and discipline, according to his own appointment, is the acknowledgment of him as King of his church.

The other, the inward kingdom of grace, is then received into the heart, when the Spirit of God moves it to a willing subjection to Jesus Christ, and the whole soul submits itself to be governed by him. He enters indeed by conquest, and yet is most gladly received. It is both a lawful and a favorable conquest, because he frees the soul, which is his by so many rights, from the tyranny of a most cruel usurper, the prince of darkness, and brings in a kingdom full of sweetness and happiness: there is no worse in it than these, *righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.* Rom. xiv. 17.

This is the folly of an unbelieving mind, that it entertains most false prejudices against the kingdom of Christ; thinks that, if it let him in, it shall be controlled and curbed, and therefore resolves against it, and studies how to hold him out; *consults* (as it is in the second Psalm) *against the Lord and his anointed.* But this is a lamentable madness, to dream of liberty in the midst of chains, and to be afraid of a deliverer. There is no soul that opens to this King of glory, but can testify that it never knew what true liberty was, till

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it admitted this kingdom of God, till there was a throne for Christ erected within it.

The third, the kingdom of *glory*—would you hear wherein that consists? It is such as we can not hear nor speak of as it is. And this indeed says more of it than all we can say, that the excellency of it is unspeakable, yea, unconceivable. This we are sure of, to speak comparatively of it (which is our help in things we understand not in themselves), that all the kingdoms of the world, unite all their glory together, are base and poor in respect of it, but *splendida in serico;* and that all the delights we have here, not only of nature, but even of grace, are less to it than the smallest sparkle is to the sun in its brightness. All that is done here by our king, Christ, in the ruling of his church, and the power of his ordinances, and the bestowing of graces on his own, are but preludes and preparations for that; and when that cometh, this way of ruling his church and people shall cease, as having attained its end. Christ shall *deliver up the kingdom to the Father;* word and sacraments, and discipline, shall be at an end; and then *God shall be all in all.* 1 Corinthians xv. 24–28.

2. The coming of the kingdom of God, in the former two, is, the extending and spreading of them to those places and persons that have not yet received them, and the increase of their power where they are entertained; for they come gradually. And that kingdom of glory, as it is concerned in the other, comes forward in them so far, and hastens toward its perfection; but in itself, as their consummation, it shall come at once altogether in the end of time.

3. So, then, in the petition, all these are included, and in their largest extent; for it is to take it too narrow and too low, to restrain it only to our own interest in this kingdom, either of grace or glory, or both. Thus David, Psalm ciii., excites all to praise the Lord, but most his own soul; begins with that, and ends with it. Although they who desire it aright, do desire that they may partake of it (for, if they desire that God may be glorified, they can not but, even out of love to that glory, beside their own happiness, desire that they themselves may be among those who may honor God as the subjects of his kingdom), yet they stay not there, but dilate their hearts to wish the advancement and accomplishment of his kingdom in all the elect, and in all those ways that tend to it; and their love may rise to that high strain, as without considering their own interest at all; yea, supposing that they were to be shut out of his kingdom themselves, yet still to wish, *Thy kingdom come:* let others enjoy and bless thee, Lord, for ever, even though I should be excluded: let thine elect be gathered, though I were none of them. Be thou great, O Lord, whatsoever become of me.

[1.] Considering what a height of glory will arise to God out of the final subduing of his enemies, and the full deliverance of his church, and the bringing home of all his children after all their sufferings and sorrows, to sit down together to that great marriage-supper of the Lamb; they can not but thus breathe forth their longings and wishes, that that time may be hastened, and the fulness of their Lord's kingdom accomplished, where it shall abide for all eternity.

[2.] Both in relation to that end, and likewise in respect of the present glory that redounds to God in it, they earnestly desire the advancement and enlargement of Christ's kingdom here on earth. For, beside that thus it is rising to its perfection, it is no small present glory to our king, Christ, as a testimony of his invincible power, that he *rules in the very midst of his enemies*, and in despite of them all, Psalm cx. 2; not only sits sure and keeps his own, thrust at him who will, but, when he pleases, gains upon them, and enlarges his territories, and grows greater by their resistances and oppositions. He is here, as David was, often assaulted, and put to defend his kingdom often in war, but always a conqueror; but after this militant kingdom, he shall be as Solomon, who likewise typified him, reigning in perfect peace.

Now, because the enemies of his kingdom are not yet, as they shall be, all *under his feet*, but round about him, and incessantly plotting and working against him, and Satan hath his kingdom and his throne in the world opposite to Christ, therefore this is one chief point of this request: that all adverse power may be brought low, that all his enemies may lick the dust, and melt before him as wax before the fire. And for us, especially in these times, that the kingdom of Antichrist, the *son of perdition*, may, answerably to that his name, be brought to perdition; that God would remember his promise (for the faithful are called his remembrancers; though he forgets not, and hath his set time for judgment, yet he loves to be stirred up by the cries of his children); that he would make good at length those words he hath spoken of Babel's ruin and the flourishing estate of his church in these latter times: that the power of the word, and purity of religion, maugre all the policy and power of men opposing it, may spread and extend itself, and make irresistible progress, as the sun in his course; that Jesus Christ may be daily taking further possession of the nations, even to the ends of the earth, according to the patent of his Father's donation. And the certainty of its endurance and growth till it be complete, should not abate, but increase the vigor of our prayers for it. And the nearer things are to their accomplishment, the more, usually, the Lord excites the hopes and prayers of his people about them, and they pray the more earnestly (see Dan. ix), moving naturally in it, and therefore, fastest when nearest their place.

Again, we pray in this, that where Christ doth reign in his outward ordinances, there

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he would bring in his spiritual kingdom into the souls of men, that *sinners may be converted unto him.* The love of the glory of Jesus Christ will desire this earnestly, that many hearts may be brought in to submit to him, for the glory of a king is in the multitude of his subjects. Further, that they who are his people, may grow more conformable to his laws; that his dominion may be more powerful in their hearts and lives, and particularly that we ourselves may find it so.

You who will not receive the kingdom of God within yourselves, to what purpose do you speak this, as if you desired it to be enlarged and flourish abroad? 1. You can have no comfort in it, remaining slaves to sin, and so enemies indeed to it. Neither the kingdom of Christ in the government of the church on the one side, nor, on the other, the coming of his kingdom of glory, can do you any benefit, while the third is wanting, the inward kingdom of his grace, which is the true end of the former, and the means to partake of the happiness of the latter. Why wish you *the day of the Lord?* Amos v. 18. As the prophet says of that day he there speaks of, mistake it not: though that day of his kingdom shall be all glory in itself, it shall be to you, remaining still impenitent, *darkness and not light*, full of horror and amazement. 2. As you can have no comfort in his kingdom, so you can not really wish its advancement. You wish it well elsewhere, as if you were content it should be anywhere, rather than within yourselves. But would you indeed have his kingdom to be embraced and advanced, then do, for one, let him be *thy* king: first, give him thine own heart, and then wish him many more; for then thou wilt wish it heartily and truly.

You who have received this kingdom, yet have need still, even in that sense, to wish the coming of it in further degrees, and fuller efficacy. Find you not many rebels yet unsubdued? No doubt, they who search and know their own hearts, will, and often do, complain of them to their king. Oh, such swarms of lusts, and unruly, irregular desires! When shall they all be brought into subjection? And so they lift up their wish, from this to the other, the full and glorious kingdom, and say again and again, *Thy kingdom come.* This is the noble desire that takes up the hearts of the godly. While others are desiring and pursuing low, base things, *their* minds, and *their* endeavor, to their power, are chiefly set upon this, the advancement of the kingdom of God. They seek not themselves and their own things, with the world, to the prejudice of this kingdom; no, they desire to lose anything, to suffer contempts and abasements themselves, so that this kingdom may flourish. St. Paul cares not what he be accounted, *modo magnificetur Christus*, so that *now also Christ may be magnified*, Phil. i. 20. As faithful ministers of state (and wise princes choose such), who are not making up themselves to their master's disadvantage, but always preferring his honor to their private benefit, feeling his losses and gains more than their own (as was said of St. Augustine, *Dominicis semper lucris gaudens, et damnis mœrens)*; this is the right temper of the servants and ministers of Jesus Christ, to be all for their Master, willing that their name, and estates, and lives, and all, may make a part of his footstool to step up to his throne; not forced as his enemies to be so, but willingly laying themselves low for his glory. And this comfort they have, that when his kingdom shall come in its fulness, and all his enemies shall be trodden down for ever, then they shall be glorified with him, and shall see his glory with exceeding joy. Therefore do they so often desire his coming, and are so weary of all they see here; and when he says himself, for their assurance and comfort, *Surely, I come quickly*, their earnest desire makes them echo, *Even so come, Lord Jesus*, Rev. xxii. 20.

There is some loss to the flesh, if we will hear it, in this desire, in each kind. The erecting of Christ's kingdom in purity in his church, thrusts out the outward pomp and magnificence that naturally we like so well. His kingdom of grace can not be in the soul, without the forsaking of all our accustomed and pleasing ways of sin. But they who know the excellency of his kingdom, are well content to forego all that suits not with it. Thus, that his kingdom of glory may come, the world must be burnt up; and, that we may particularly come to it, we must pass through death. But it is worth all.

*Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.*]

*I will direct my prayer to thee*, says David, Psalm v. 3. The word is, *I will set in order*, or *orderly address it.* Which implies not the curious contriving either of the words or method (for there may be most of that, where there is least of this right directing it to God), but the due ordering of the frame and desires of the heart. And certainly, one main point of that is taught us, as we have said, in the order of this prayer, in this particular; that it not only prefers the honor of God to all our own interest, setting the heart first upon that, but keeps it to it, causes it to dwell upon that in three several petitions, varying the expression of that one desire, as often as there be several requests following, of our own concernment; teaching us, that that doth, in its own worth, and therefore should likewise in our affection, itself alone being but one, weigh down all the different things besides that we can desire. And thus withal, it is accommodate to our dulness, for that our hearts would not readily, with one word, be either duly stirred up or stretched forth in the heavenly desire: so that, both to excite and to dilate them the more, it is thus iterated without vain tautology. This so short and complete a form, given us by so

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wise a master, is far from that; yea, it was particularly intended in opposition to that abuse. And not only doth the dignity of the thing itself, and our indisposedness, require this adding of one request to another concerning it, but there is in the petitions themselves, a very profitable difference, though their scope is one: they are as so many several arrows aimed at the same mark. The first, in general, wishes all manner of honor to the *name* of God; and because his name is especially honored in the advancement, and in the completing of his spiritual *kingdom*, the second is particular in *that*. And because until that kingdom be completed and brought all together, it lies in two several countries—there is one part of it already above, which is the appointed place for the perfection and perpetuity of this kingdom; another part here below, but tending thither; this third petition particularly concerns these of this lower region and condition, desiring this, that in obedience to their king, they may be as conformed as is possible, to those above. *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

*Thy will.*] God is most perfectly one, and his will one; yea, his will is himself, he is *purus actus;* yet, in respect of its several objects or circumstances that concern them, it is diversely distinguished in the schools, sometimes needlessly, yea, erroneously, but some of the distinctions are sound and useful. But here we shall not need them much. His will is here taken, according to a very usual figure, for that which he wills; and we desire here, that we ourselves, and others, may be obedient to his will in everything, even here on earth: that he may be acknowledged and served, not only in heaven, but here likewise.

For this, no question, means not the equality of our obedience to theirs, but the quality of it; that, though it fall very far short of so perfect a pattern, yet it may bear some resemblance to it; as a scholar's writing, though it be nothing so good as his copy, yet may have so much likeness as to show he follows it. It doth no wrong, but helps a man much in anything, the more perfect example he hath before him; although he be not able to match it, yet, the looking on it, makes him do the better: though an archer shoot not so high as he aims, yet the higher he takes his aim, the higher he shoots. And, that we may not think it strange, that we have here the citizens of heaven set before us as a model for obedience, we have our heavenly Father himself propounded by our Savior in the former chapter, as our example for perfection: *Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.* The obedience in heaven, is, 1. Universal, without choosing and excepting; and this is, because the will and command of God is the very reason of it. The angels are said to *do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word* Psalm ciii. 20: they wait but for a word from him, and that is enough. And in this should we desire to be like them. Though we can not fully keep any one commandment, yet should we exclude none of them from our endeavor: yea, the rather, because we want that perfection in the degree, should we study this other, which is a kind of perfection in the design and purpose, to *have respect to all the commandments*, as David says; to have our eye upon them all, as the word there is, Psalm cxix. 6. So Psalm xvi. 8: *I have set the Lord always before me* [*æqualiter posui*], in an even, constant regard of his will. And the want of this discovers, that much of our obedience hath not the right stamp on it, is no way *heavenly.*

A man may think he approves and does the will of God in some things, where it is but by accident, because the letter of the commandment is coincident with his own will; and so, it is not the will of God, but his own, that moves him; therefore, in doing that which God commands, he does not God's will, but his own; and therefore, when they meet not, but are contrary, there it appears, for he leaves God's will then, and follows his own. A covetous father condemns the prodigality of his lavish son, and the son again cries out against the avarice of his niggardly father, and thus both seem to condemn sin; but the truth is, neither do it: it is but two extreme sins fighting together, neither of them regarding the rule that God hath set: it is but their two idols choking each other, as the heathen set their gods together by the ears. But they who therefore hate sin, because of God's countermand, and love his will for itself, their obedience is more even, and regards the whole will of God, and at all times: for there is that universality too in their obedience, conformable to that of heaven. *So shall I keep thy law,* says David, *continually, for ever and ever.* Psalm cxix. 44.

See a man's carriage when tempted or provoked to some sin. For when the occasion is out of reach, and out of sight, what wonder if then he forbears? But when it offers itself, as, by company, intemperance, or cursing or swearing by passion, it appears, if a man yield then, that sin was not out before, but only lay close and quiet within, till it was stirred, as mud in the bottom of water. *Natura vexata prodit seipsam.* So, a man may, for his own gain, or his own glory, do God's will. Jehu could say to Jonadab, *Come and see my zeal for the Lord.*

2. The obedience of heaven is cheerful. It is the very natural motion of glorified spirits, to be acted and moved by the will of God. *They excel in strength,* says the psalmist, in that ciiid Psalm, *and do his commandments:* they have no other use for all their strength; that is the proper employment of it. Thus, the godly man, in so far as he is renewed (for in so far he suits with heaven), delights himself in the way of God's commandments

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takes more pleasure in keeping them, than profane men do in all their pleasures of sin, by which they break them. He is never well but when he is in the way of obedience; and the ways of sin are painful and grievous to him. Then hath he most inward gladness and contentment, when he keepeth closest to his rule. And the reason why he finds the law of God thus pleasant, is, because it is not to him, as to the ungodly, one *without*, driving him violently, but it is *within* him, and therefore moves him sweetly. *I delight to do thy will, O my God*, Psalm xl. 8, and he adds, *Thy law is within my heart*, or, in the midst of my bowels. So, Psalm lxxxiv. 5: *In whose heart are thy ways:* not only their feet in the ways, but the ways are in their hearts.

3. They do the will of God in heaven, unanimously and harmoniously; there is neither an evil eye of envy among them, nor a lofty eye of pride, whatsoever degrees there be among them in their stations and employments. Not to be curious in that, nor to obtrude ourselves into things we have not seen, yet, we are sure, the lesser do not envy the greater, nor the greater despise the less; and the reason is, because they are all so wholly taken up and so strongly united in this joint desire of doing the will of God. Thus ought his servants here, each one in his place, and according to that which God hath dispensed to him, the greatest, humbly, and the meanest, contentedly, to mind this, and nothing but this, *to do his will.*

Answerably to the sense of this petition, do godly men, in prayer, [1.] Vent their regret and grief unto God, that there is so little regard and obedience to his among men, that they see the greatest part *taking pleasure in unrighteousness*, as the apostle speaks, 2 Thess. ii. 12. Thus David, Psalm cxix. 136: *Rivers of water run down mine eyes because men keep not thy law.* And as they bewail ungodliness without them, so especially, the strength of corruption within themselves: they begin there, and express their grief, in the presence of God, that they are so clogged and hampered with sin cleaving fast to them, and crossing their purposes of obedience; saying with the apostle, *I find a law in my members warring against the law of my mind.* Rom. vii. 23. [2.] They declare their desire of redress, both in themselves and others; that their great desire is, that more obedience were given unto God, and particularly, that they had more faculty and strength to serve him. Psalm cxix. 4, 5. [3.] They pray in this, for the effecting of this their desire, that God would incline men's hearts, and particularly their own to the obedience of his will (whatsoever vain will-worshippers say, they are indeed in that sense, *θελόθρησκοι*, make a deity of the will); not doubting that it is in his hand to do so, and that he hath more power of our hearts than we ourselves have. Otherwise, it were in vain to put these supplications into his hand, if he have no power to answer them, to give them the real answer of performance. *Incline my heart unto thy law*, &c. *Turn us, O Lord*, &c. [4.] They do, in this request, offer up their own hearts to God, to be fashioned and moulded to his will. And every godly man, if he had the hearts of all the men in the world in his disposal, he would dispose them the same way, lodge them with his own, and make one sacrifice of all. His own he gives wholly, resigns it up to his Lord, to be as a piece of wax, in God's hand, pliable to what form he will, to do with it what he will, to turn out and banish whatsoever displeases him, and to make it to his own mind. In a word, this is the desire of a Christian, that his own will may be annihilated, and the will of God placed in its room; that he may have no will but God's; that he may be altogether subject both to God's commanding and his working will, to do what he commands, and to be heartily content with what he does; for both these are in it.

Where he commands anything, though our own corrupt will grumble at it, and think it hard, we must tread upon it to obey his will, making that the rule of all we do. To this end, we must endeavor to be acquainted with his will, and to know what it is: otherwise we can not do it. But once knowing it, this is the end of knowing, to do; otherwise, you know, that knowledge will make us the worse for it, the more guilty.

It is a a safe and comfortable thing, to walk every step by his direction. The constant regard of that, is, we see, what conforms us to heaven. It was observable how this will prevailed with Abraham: he was a loving father, it appears, and upon Sarah's private motion, while there was no more, he could not find in his heart to put Ishmael out of doors, who was but *the son of the bond-woman;* but upon God's command, he was ready to put Isaac to death, who was *the son of the promise.* And He who taught us to pray thus, gives us his own example in this: he did the will of his Father indeed, *as it is done in heaven*, and he came to the earth for that purpose: *Then, said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O my God.* And, in that great and most painful part of his work, *Not my will, but thine be done.* For our actions, then, let his word be our guide; and for the events of things, and all that concerns us, let his good pleasure and wise disposing be our will. Let us give up the rudder of our life into his hand, to be steered by him.

For our actions, is it not better to observe his will, than to be subject to our own corrupt wills, and to Satan's, *led captive at his will?* And, as it is our best, to *do* what pleaseth him, so, in all his dealings with us, to be pleased with what *he* does; not to think it were better for us to be richer or greater in the world than we are, or to murmur and struggle under affliction. There is nothing to be gained by this. Who hath resisted his will at any time? In all things he doth what



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he will, whether it like us or not. Our repining hinders not his working at all, but it hinders our own comfort: our wrestling and fretting doth but pain ourselves. If we be his (as we profess), then we may be assured he loves us; and if we believe that, and withal believe that he is wiser than we, then we must confess, that whatsoever he doth with us, is better than our own choosing for ourselves could be.

This is the only way of constant quietness and contentment of mind. Who is there outwardly so prosperous, but meets with many things that cross his will? Now, he who hath renounced his own will, and is fixed upon a continual complacency with the good pleasure and providence of God, to will what he wills, and nothing else; everything that befalls him, he looks upon that side of it as God's will, and so is satisfied: Doth God think this good, and shall I think it evil?

There is a difference of estates, but all coming from the same hand (which is Job's consideration), to embrace and kiss the worst that can come, is our duty. *It is the Lord*, said David, *let him do what seems good in his eyes.* 2 Sam. x. 12. Thus, Wilt thou have me poor or rich, healthful or sick, esteemed or despised? Wilt thou that I live, or that I die? I am thine, thy will be done.

*Give us this day our daily bread.*] Man is made up of two different principles, a soul derived from heaven, and a body at first moulded out of earth; as Nazianzen expresses it, πνοὴ καὶ χοῦς, the *breath* of God, and the *dust* of the earth, *Ex igneo spiritu, et terreno corpore.* And according to his composition, so is this prayer comprised; being made for his use, it is wisely fitted to his condition.

The greatest part of it is taken up with such desires as are spiritual, and so most suitable to his worthier part, his soul; such as do immediately concern God, and such as properly concern itself. Yet, the body is not wholly shut out: though the meaner part, yet being a part of man, and the workmanship of God, this one petition is bestowed upon its concernment.

Observe in it briefly, First, The matter or object of the request. Secondly, The qualification of it. The matter under the name of *bread;* not only bread for all food, as the Hebrews do, but *food*, so named for all other necessaries. By *bread*, as the chief support and staff of man's life, is meant, all needful temporal blessings, food and raiment, and health and peace, &c., a blessing on the works of our calling, and the seasons of the year, and all our lawful temporal affairs.

Though a godly man looks upon the necessities of this life as a piece of his present captivity, and is often looking beyond it to that purer life he hopes for, yet, in the meanwhile, he doth, in obedience to God, use these things, and in dependance upon God, he seeks them at God's own hand.

In the request, together with its object, as here we have it, there is, I. Piety. II. Moderation—*Godliness* and *soberness.*

I. *Piety*, in asking our *bread* of God, in asking it in the true notion, by way of *gift.*

*Our daily bread.* There is a natural cry or voice of our necessity, and that not only ungodly men, but unreasonable creatures have, the very beasts and fowls, as the cxlviith Psalm hath it (ver. 9): *The ravens ask their meat from God.* But this spiritual cry of prayer is the peculiar voice of God's own children. Now, to ask bread, or needful temporal things, at the hands of God, is not only no way incongruous to the piety and spiritual-mindedness of a Christian, and no wrong to the majesty of God, but, on the contrary, it were impiety in man, and an injury to God, not to do so. We have here the warrant of his own command, *Pray thus.* And is it not most reasonable?

1. Seeing these things are necessary for us to receive, and are in the hand of God to bestow, why ought we not to seek them there? Although, in his wisdom, he knows what we need, and is in bounty most ready to furnish us, yet, this is the homage we owe to God, to present ourselves and our necessities before him, and seek our supplies by prayer. In it, there is a clear acknowledgment of the Divine providence and goodness, and of our faith and reliance on it. And faith is not only signified in prayer, in these things, but is acted and excited, and by that means is increased and strengthened.

2. Godliness hath both kinds of promises, those of the life to come, and those of this life. 1 Tim. iv. 8. And as godliness hath a right to them both, so, it teacheth to use them both; and particularly this way, by turning the promises into prayers, as a means appointed by God, both to fit us for obtainment, and to obtain the performance of them.

3. Though a man hath his provision by him, not only of a day, but of many years, yet hath he need still daily to ask it of God; for it is still in God's hand to give it to him, or not to give, though it is in a man's own hand in present possession. [1.] It is in God's disposal to continue it to him, or suddenly to pluck it from him out of his hand, or even out of his mouth, *ut bolus ereptus è faucibus.* How many have been thus on a sudden turned out of great estates into extreme poverty, either by the hands of men, which are moved by God, or by some immediate accident from his own hand; and others, by little and little, their estates consuming and melting as snowballs! In the former, the judgment of God is as a *lion*, and in the latter, as a *moth*, as the prophet speaks. Hos. v. 12, 14. Again, [2.] If God do continue a man in his possessions, yet, there is further needful for his cheerful use of daily bread, that calmness and content of mind, and healthfulness of body, which are God's peculiar gifts, without which all is unsavory. Is the mind in bitterness or distemper, or the body tied to

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its sick-bed, this disrelishes a man's daily bread, though it be of the richest kind. [3.] Having bread, and a disposition to use it, yet, there is further an influence of blessing from God needful to make it serve its proper end; and without this, that staff of life is but as a broken staff in a man's hand, that can not support him. [4.] Besides that ordinary blessing, there is yet something further, that a godly man desires, and desires most of all, a secret character and stamp of the peculiar favor of God even upon his *bread*, his temporal enjoyments. And this is a proper fruit of prayer. As there is (as is already said) a peculiar voice of God's own children in this request, so, God knows it particularly, and distinguishes it from the common voice of natural men, and other creatures that call for supply; and therefore, he gives that peculiar voice of their suit, a peculiar answer: together with the *daily bread* which he gives to others, and a common blessing on it, they have something that is not given to others. This is that which particularly sweetens their bread, that they receive it after a special manner out of their Father's own hand, having humbly asked it by prayer as his gift.

That is the other thing observable in the word of the request, *Give*.

We are not by this forbidden, no, nor dispensed with from labor and honest industry for it, but, after all our our labor, we are still to acknowledge all as a free gift; both the bread we obtain by labor, and the strength by which we labor. Just as we find it of the other bread, the *bread of life*. John vi. 27. *Labor for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you:* labored for, and yet given. The fruit of our labors may be just reward from men, but it is always free from God; even these lowest benefits to the best and holiest men. *I am less*, says Jacob, *than the least of thy mercies*. Gen. xxxii. 10. We have no motive for the least mercy, but his own goodness as *our Father;* so that it suits with this, as with all the other requests here. Though we deserve nothing, yet He is *our Father:* it is proper for children to ask bread of their father, as our Savior teaches us in the next chapter; therefore he teaches us here to say, *Father, give us bread*.

II. The moderation of the desire appears in comparison of the number of the other petitions. All the rest are for things spiritual, and but one for temporals: those that regard the glory of God as the chief are three to one with it; and those that concern our own spiritual good, two for one. Thus for the number. And as for the order or place, which so many have taken quite contrary, it suits very well with this as the least of our requests, and so to be accounted by us. It is strange, that this right place of it should have scared men from its right meaning, and persuaded them to take it for our spiritual food, or the bread of life, because it is the first of the three. But taking it as it is, for this life's necessaries, there is no need of such reasons as some give for its standing in this order, which are a little light and unsolid. But, to omit even those that are more pertinent, which justify this order, though this petition be less than the two following, it seems truly the only fit place for it, for that very reason, because it is the least. It is known to be the ordinary course of skilful orators, to place the meanest part of their speech in the middle; and in this, let the ear of any understanding mind be judge, whether it sounds not much better, that this request pass in the middle, than if the prayer should have ended with it. Whereas now, it begins spiritually, and closes so. And this petition, which is *de impedimentis militiæ nostræ* (for the things of this life prove so too often), is cast in the middle.

Now, how few are there who follow Christ's estimate in this, who have the very strength of their desires, and most of their thoughts, on things that are spiritual, and do but in passing lend a word to the things of this life!* This proportion few will admit: it makes not for their purpose. The apostle gives this character of those who perish, that they *mind earthly things*. Phil. iii. 19.

But to consider the words, each word designing the matter of this request, doth clearly teach us moderation in it. *Give us our daily bread. Having food and raiment*, says the apostle, *let us be content*. 1 Tim. vi. 8. How few be there of us, if any, who want these; and yet, how few that have contentment! It is the enormity and boundlessness of our desires that causeth this. There is no necessity for curious food and raiment, but such food as nourishes, and such raiment as covers.

*Our daily bread.* In the original, ἐπιούσιον. Not at all to dispute the word, its genuine sense is, *such as is fit for our daily sustentation;* therefore rendered, *daily bread*. And it answers well to the word in that petition of Agur, Prov. xxx. 8, *convenient* (or *proportionable*) *food*, and so agrees with what we said of bread—*proportionable*, not to our lust, but our necessity. This was the sin of the Jews, and a most impertinent sin in the wilderness, *They asked meat for their lust:* (Psalm lxxviii. 18), they were not content with bread for themselves, but must have meat for their lust too, must have that fed likewise. We are not to be carvers of the proportion ourselves, but leave that to God, who knows best what is *convenient* for us; therefore the word is there, *of my set*, or *ordained, portion* —ordained by thee.

*Our* bread, [Ἡμῶν.] Not seeking any other than that which is our own by our just industry and God's free gift. What is it, but the base, immoderate desire of having, that

* *Quamprimum à corpore ad animam redeundum.*—SENECA.

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stretches a man beyond this? When a man lays down that conclusion with himself, that he must have so much, then it follows, that any way tending to that he must use; if he can, by right, but if not, any way, rather than miss; by violence and oppression, or by deceit, through all ways, fair and foul.* When a man is once upon that journey there is no stopping, until either God recall him, or he plunge himself in the pit of destruction. *They that will be rich*, says the apostle, who are resolved upon that, *they fall into temptation and divers snares, which drown men in destruction and perdition.* 1 Timothy, vi. 9. That is the issue.

*This day.* It is true, that this condemns not a due providence in men for themselves and their families, in a just and moderate way. But men deceive themselves in this; few stay there, but, under that name, harbor gross avarice and earthliness. But in this word, we have the true temper of a Christian mind, that, whatsoever is his own lawful providence, and whatsoever is the success of it, what he lives and relies on, is, the providence of God, not his own: he lives upon that from one day to another, as a child in his father's house; and for provision for afterward, thinks it as good in God's hand as if it were in his own, and therefore asks not so much stock, or so much yearly rent, but *bread for to-day.* If he have much land or great revenues, yet, he trusts no more in that, than if he had nothing; and if he have bread for to-day, and nothing for to-morrow (as the Israelites had manna), yet he trusts no less in God than if he had thousands. He resolves thus: Whether I have much or little, I am at God's providing, and live upon that from day to day. *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

Ευσέβεια ἀυτάρκεια, 1 Tim. vi. 6—these two together, as we have observed them here together, *godliness* and *moderation:* godliness in this particular, of casting over our care of temporal things on God by prayer. So Phil. iv. 5—*Let your moderation be known.* But how shall we have it? *Make your requests known unto God*, and that *in all things.* That will ease you, and not trouble him. But when we lodge such desires as are not fit indeed to be imparted to him, this is our shame, and proves our vexation. It is a wonder what men mean, but it is a folly so rooted in men's hearts, that no discourse will pluck it up; they imagine that there is happiness in having much, and will neither believe religion, nor reason, nor experience, though all teach the contrary. They can not be persuaded to make this the rule of their desires—*daily bread*, and, *for to-day;* but are still projecting for a long time to come, though they are not sure of a day. Men are still beginning to live, even when their years tell them they should be thinking how to die; are upon new contrivances for the world, when they must shortly leave it. And this is one point of this our decease, that it grows still and is strongest in old age, when there is least reason for it. *Quo minus viæ restat, eo plus viatici comparare.*

What is this that riches can do? Our Savior tells us, if we will believe him, that *Man's life doth not consist in the abundance of the things he possesseth.* Luke xii. 15. There is something necessary, we see, and truly that is not much; and what more than serves, many times proves but mere incumbrance. One staff will help a man in his way, but a bundle of staves would burden and weary him. Would men but stop a little and ask themselves, What is this I do? What do I aim at in all my turmoil? it might possibly recall them. Would they but hear Solomon's question, Eccl. v. 11, and tell him, *what good the rich have of possessing more than they use, but only the beholding of them with their eyes.* If there be anything more, it is more care and trouble, *et curæ circum laqueata tecta volantes.* He that hath a hundred rooms, hath but one body; he can lodge but in one at once. He that might have sea and land ransacked for delicates of his table, hath himself but one appetite to serve with them all.

Then, consider, that beyond the bounds of this petition, if a man once pass, there be no bounds after; he knows not where to stay. *Depinge ubi sistam.* One thousand would have something more, to save it unspent; and when that grows a little, it is best even to make another thousand, and save that too, and fall a scraping for more.

And if this is always a phrensy, most of all in these times. *Behold*, says God to Baruch, *I will break down that which I have built, and that which I have planted will I pluck up, even this whole land, and seekest thou great things for thyself?* Jer. xlv. 4, 5.

But is it not wisdom to be provident, and to see far before a man? And to look no farther but to the present, is it not the character of a fool? True, it is indeed; and therefore, the truly wise man despises this providence for a base, uncertain life, and is content if alive but from one day to another. But there is a higher design in his head, a providence of a farther reach, that sees afar off, indeed, to make himself an estate for eternity. That takes up his thoughts and pains: the other is the grossest short-sightedness, to look no farther than a moment; it is indeed, μυοπαζειν, as St. Peter speaks. But that life the Christian's eye is upon, is of another nature, where none of these poor things shall have place, *no marrying nor giving in marriage*, as our Savior says; so, no eating or drinking, no need of bread, nor of this prayer for it; but we shall be *as the angels* of God.

*And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*] *Thy loving kindness*, says David, *is better than life:* therefore, this request rises above the former. In it, we sought bread

* *Si possis, rectè, si non, quocunque modo,* REM.—HORACE.

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for the present life; in this we entreat his favor: not corn, nor wine, nor oil, but that which glads the heart more than them all, *the light of his countenance;* that the thick cloud of our sins be dispelled by a free pardon, as he promises, Isa. xliv. 2.

In this petition we have, 1. The request. 2. The clause added.

*Forgive us our debts.* That which is here called *debts*, St. Luke hath *sins;* and here, in the observation our Savior adds, they are called, παραπτώματα, *offences.* Now sin, as it is called a debt, is taken for the guiltiness of sin, which is no other than *pœnas debere*, to *owe the suffering of punishment*, or an obligement to the curse which the Law hath pronounced against sin; and because this results so immediately from sin, therefore, sin is often put for the engagement to punishment; so the apostle's phrase, 1 Cor. xv. ult., may be taken. So then, the debt of sin being the tie to punishment which follows upon it, the forgiving of sin can be no other than the acquitting of a man from that curse, setting him free from his debt, his engagement to suffer; and therefore, to imagine a forgiveness of sin with retaining of the punishment, is direct nonsense, and a contradiction.

To pass the words of this request through our mouths, as the rest, is an easy and common thing, but altogether fruitless; but to offer it as a spiritual supplication of the heart unto God, is a thing done but by a few; and to as many as do offer it so, it never returns in vain, but is certainly granted. Now, to offer it so, as a lively spiritual suit unto God, there are necessarily supposed in the soul that presents it, these things:—

1. A clear conviction and deep sense of the guiltiness of sin. Both in *general*, what this guiltiness is, what is that debt which sin engages us in, that misery to which it binds us over; as, first, the deprivement of happiness, the loss of God and his favor for ever; and secondly, the endless endurance of his wrath and hottest indignation, and all the anguish which that is able to fill the soul with to all eternity. Unsufferable, inconceivable torment, described to us by such things as we can understand, but going infinitely beyond them, *a gnawing worm that dies not*, and *a fire* that can not be quenched. *This is the portion of the sinner from God, and the heritage appointed to him by God*, as Zophar speaks, Job xx. 29. Then, in *particular*, there must be a seeing of our own guiltiness. A man must know himself to be nothing else than a mass of sin, and so, fuel for that fire; must see himself a transgressor of the whole law of God, and therefore abundantly liable to that sentence of death.

2. Upon this apprehension will follow a very earnest desire to be free, and such a word as that, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me!* And seeing no way either to satisfy or escape, without a free pardon, the soul then looks upon that as its only happiness, with David: *Blessed is the man*—O the blessedness of that man!—*whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.* Psalm xxxii. 1.

3. In this request, there is a taking of it as a thing attainable; for it is implied that there is no impossibility in it. And this arises from the promises of God, and the tenor of the covenant of grace, and the Mediator of that covenant revealed in the word, apprehended only in their general tenor.

4. It imports an humble confession of guiltiness before the Lord; as it follows there, Ps. xxxii. 5: *I acknowledged my sin, and mine iniquity have I not hid.* The way to find God hiding and covering it, he perceived, was for himself not to hide it. The way to be acquitted at God's hand, is for the soul with humility and grief to accuse itself before him.

5. Where there is this sensible knowledge and humble acknowledgment of sin and misery, and earnest desire of pardon, then doth a man truly offer this suit unto God with strong affection, *Lord, this is my request, that my sin may be forgiven;* and prays it in faith, which is a more particular laying hold on the promises, believing that he will forgive, and therefore waits for an answer, to hear that *voice of joy and gladness*, as David speaks, Psalm li. 8, to hear the word of his pardon from God, spoken into his soul. And for this cause (beside the need of daily pardon for daily sins), the most godly men have need to renew this suit, that, together with pardon, they may obtain the comfortable persuasion and assurance of it. And though they have some assurance, yet, there be further degrees of it possible, and desirable, clearer evidences of reconcilement and acceptance with God. Forgiveness itself is, indeed, the main, and is often granted where the other, the assurance of it, is withheld for a time: but there is no question that we may, yea, that we ought to desire it, and seek after it. He is blessed who is pardoned, though as yet he know it not; yet, doubtless, it abates much of his happiness for the time that he does not know it. *Non est beatus, esse qui se non putet.*

The philosopher says, *The poor man thinks him happy who is rich, and the sick man, him who is in health:* their own wants make them think so. Now, this forgiveness of sin is happiness indeed; yet a man must first feel the want of it, before he judge so. But here is the difference: when he hath obtained it, he shall think so still; whereas the other, being tried, are found to fall short, and do not make any man happy.

Seeing this is a request of so great moment, may we not wonder at ourselves, that we are so cold and indifferent in it? But the true reason of this is, because so few are truly sensible of this heavy debt, of the weight of sin unpardoned. A man who feels it not, prays thus, not much troubling his thoughts whether it be granted or no; but he who is

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indeed pressed with the burden of sin, cries in earnest, *Lord, forgive.* David knew what he said, when he called him *blessed whose sin is forgiven;* the word is, who is *unloaded of his sin.* He was a king, and a great captain, but he says not, "He is a blessed man who wears a crown, or who is successful in war," but, "Blessed is he whose sin is taken off his shoulders; whatsoever he is otherwise, he is a happy man." It is in vain to offer a conscience groaning under sin, anything else, until it be eased of that. If you should see a man lying grovelling under some weight that is ready to press him to death, and should bring sweet music to him, and cover a table with delicacies before him, but let him lie still under his burden, could he, think you, take any pleasure in those things? Were it not rather to mock him, to use him so?

And though we feel it not as troubled consciences do, yet, we are truly miserable in all enjoyments, until this forgiveness be obtained. To what purpose daily bread, yea, what is the greatest abundance of all outward things, but a glittering misery, if this be wanting? But he who is once forgiven, and received into favor with God, what can befall him amiss? Though he hath no more of the world than *daily bread*, and of the coarsest sort, he hath a continual feast within: as he that said, "*Brown bread and the gospel, is good fare.*" Now, the gospel is the doctrine of this forgiveness of sin, and is therefore so sweet to an humbled sinner. Yea, though a man have not only a small portion of earthly comforts, but be under divers afflictions and chastisements, yet, this makes him cheerful in all: as Luther said, *Feri, Domine*, &c. Use me as thou wilt, seeing thou hast forgiven my sin, all is well.

*Lastly*, as there must be earnest desire in the request, so, withal, firm belief. *Ask in faith.* If once thou art become an humble suiter for mercy, and that is the great desire of thy heart, that God would take away thy sin, and be reconciled to thee; then know, that he will not cast back thy petition in displeasure. Now, he is gracious, and whatsoever thou hast been, consider what he is. Doth he receive any for anything in themselves? What is the cause he pardons any? Is it not for his own name's sake? Isa. xliii. 25. And will not that reason serve for thee, as much as for others? Will it not avail for many sins, as well as for few? Hast thou multiplied sin often, abused his mercy, but now mournest before him for it? Then he will multiply pardon. Isa. lv. 7; Jer. iii. 1. Thou hast rebelled much, but he is thy Father, and hath the bowels of a father to a repenting child. And this style we give him in this prayer, as fitly urging all our suits, *Father, forgive us our sins: therefore* forgive, because thou art *our Father.* And then consider, that *he* who puts this petition, among the rest, in our mouths, hath satisfied for believers, paid all their scores, and answered justice to the full, and in him we are forgiven it is a free forgiveness to us, though he hath paid for it; and he himself was freely given to us, to undertake and satisfy for us. Yet, let not any thus embolden themselves to sin; this were the grossest impudence, to come to crave pardon of sin while we delight in it, and to desire it to be forgiven, while we have no mind to part with it and forsake it. For this privilege belongs only to repenting and returning sinners.

*As we forgive our debtors.*] This is added both as a fit motive for us to use with God, and as a suitable duty that he requires of us. The former we may perceive in the manner that St. Luke hath it: *For we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.* Thou, Lord, requirest of us to forgive others, and thou workest it in some of us to do so: how much more then may we hope, thou wilt forgive us? If there be any such goodness in us, it is from thee, and therefore is infinitely more in thyself, as the ocean of goodness.

Again, this is likewise a very profitable argument to move us to this duty; as we see clearly by our Savior's returning to speak of it after the prayer: it is not only bound upon us by this precept, but by our prayer.

This *(as)*, just as before in the third petition, means not equality in the degree, but conformity in the thing.

Now, the request running thus, they who do not forgive their brethren, turn it into a most heavy curse to themselves, and, in effect, pray daily, *Lord, never forgive me my sin.* And whether they say this or no, he will do thus, if we be such fools as not to accept of such an agreement. He hath infinite debt upon our heads, that we shall never be able to pay: now, though there is no proportion, yet he is graciously pleased, without further reckoning, to forgive us all, and discharge us fully, if we accept (as it were) of this his letter of exchange, and for his sake forgive our brethren the few pence that at the most they can be owing us, in lieu of the thousands of talents that he acquits to us. And by this as our certain evidence, we may be assured of our pardon, and rejoice in it, as our Savior after clearly affirms; and therefore, on the contrary (which he likewise tells us), may well take our debates, and hatreds, and desires of revenge, as a countersign, testifying to us that we are *not* forgiven at God's hand.

And think not to satisfy him with superficial forgivenesses and reconcilements. Would we be content with such pardon from God, to have only a present forbearance of revenge, or that he should not quarrel with us, but no further friendship with him; that he should either use strangeness with us, and not speak to us, or only for fashion's sake? And yet, such are many of our reconcilements with our brethren. God's way of forgiving is thorough and hearty, both to forgive and to forget (as Jer. xxxi.); and if thine be not so, thou hast no portion in his.

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What a base, miserable humor is this same desire of revenge, this spirit of malice that possesses men, and they think themselves brave in it, that they forgive no injuries, can put up with no affronts, as they speak! Solomon was of another mind, and he was a king, and a wise king, and knew well enough what honor meant: *It is the glory of a man to pass by a transgression*, said he, Proverbs xix. 11. And we see, inferior magistrates and officers may punish: but it is a part of the prerogative of kings to pardon: it is royal to forgive, yea, it is Divine, it is to be like a God. Matt. v. 44–48: *Be you perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*—and the perfection is, *Do good to them that persecute you*, &c., *as* HE *causeth the sun to shine on the just and the unjust.*

There is more true pleasure in forgiving, than ever any man found in revenge. Father Desales said, that "Whereas men think it so hard a thing to forgive a wrong, he found it so sweet, that, if the contrary were commanded him, he would have much ado to obey it." Were the law of love written in our hearts, it would be thus with us. It would teach us effectually to forgive others, if we knew and found in our experience the boundless love of God in forgiving us.

*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*] As the doctrine of Divine mercy, mistaken and abused by carnal minds, emboldens them to sin: so, being rightly apprehended and applied, there is nothing more powerful to possess the heart with indignation against sin, and love of holiness. So that this request agree most fitly with the former: where *that* is presented aright, the heart will be no less sincere and earnest in this other. The guiltiness of sin, and the prevailing power of it, are the two evils which the godly feel more than all other pressures in the world. Deliverance from both, is jointly promised in the new covenant (Jer. xxxi. 33, 34), and is here jointly entreated in these two petitions. We shall explain,

I. What this *temptation* and *evil* is.

II. What is meant by *not leading into* it, and *delivering from* it.

I. *Temptation*] In the original, Πειρασμὸς, a trial; that which gives proof of a man's strength, and of his disposition, which draws forth what is within him. And thus, in most things we meet withal in the world, there is some *tempting* faculty, to try us what we are, on the using of them. But especially such things as are more eminent in their nature, that have much power with us: as eminent place and public charge try both the ability and integrity of men: afflictions try the faith and stability of men's minds; injuries try whether they are truly meek and patient or no; they stir the water that was possibly clear at top, and so try whether it be not muddy at the bottom.

But by *temptation* here, are meant, occasions and provocations to sin. So, likewise, the word *(evil)* in the other clause, is not to be taken for afflictions and crosses, but, for the *evil of sin*, or for that *evil one*, as he is called, 1 John ii. 13; and that, particularly in relation to the evil of sin, wherein he hath so frequent and so great a hand.

There be outward things which are not in themselves evil, and yet prove temptations to us, because they meet with a depraved, corrupt heart in us; as riches, and honor, and beauty, and, to intemperance, dainty meats, or the *wine when it is red in the cup*, as Solomon speaks; and upon these, men sometimes turn over the blame of their disorders, but most foolishly.

Other temptations and tempters there be without us, which are themselves evil, and, by tempting, partake of our sin; the profane example and customs of the world; ungodly men, by their practices, and counsels, and enticements, drawing others to sin, putting others into the same mire wherein they are wallowing.

But the most effectual tempter of all, is that which the Apostle St. James gives as the chief, and without which, indeed, none other could prevail. James i. 14: *Every man is tempted of his own concupiscence.* Whosoever it is that begets it, that is the womb wherein all sin is conceived, and that *brings it forth*, as he there adds: yea, this were able of itself to be fruitful in sin, though there were not a devil to tempt it to it, and doth no doubt often tempt us without his help.

Yet because he is so continually busied in this work, is so constant a stickler in the greatest part of sins in the world, therefore, it is not unlikely that this is particularly meant of *him*.

Howsoever, he is, out of doubt, the greatest of all inward tempters (and therefore it is pertinent to consider his share in them), the most skilful, the most active and diligent, and he that manages all other kind of temptations against us, both such as are without us in the world and such as are within us: he works upon our own corruption, stirring and blowing it up by his suggestions, and sometimes throwing in balls of his own infernal fire, which are grievous and abominable to the soul into which he casts them. It is his name and profession, ὁ πειράζων, that great *pirate*, who robs upon all seas, who is every where catching the souls of men. And he is well seen in his trade, a known spirit, who manifested his skill shrewdly in his first essay against man; that serpent's first poison killed the whole race of mankind: and now he is perfected by long experience and practice, hath his methods, as arts after a time are drawn into method. He hath his topics, his several sorts of temptations for several tempers, and hath great insight into the subject he is to work upon, and so fits the one to the other.

The profane, who will be easily drawn to the grossest sins, he is not at the pains to find out other ways for them, but hurries them along in that highway to destruction, using his advantage either of their gross ignorance

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or hardness of heart. Others, who are resolved to live outwardly blameless, he endeavors to take and hold fast to himself by pride, and self-love, and malice, and covetousness, by formality in religion, unbelief; which are things, though smaller wrought than some others, yet, there are as strong, and hold men as fast to be led captive at his will.

And the godly, because they are escaped and set free from his tyranny, and he is desperate of reducing them, yet, because he can do no more, he is sure to be a perpetual vexation and trouble to them, so far as he is let loose: he is most unwearied in his assaults, gives them no respite, neither when he gains upon them, nor when he is foiled and repulsed.

II. Let us next consider what the request is,—not to be *led into temptation*, and, to be *delivered from evil*.

*Lead us not.*] Not that God doth solicit a man to sin, for that is most contrary to his most pure nature: as St. James tells us plainly, *He is neither so tempted, nor tempts he any.* But his leading into temptation is, briefly, [1.] To permit a man to be tempted. [2.] To withdraw his grace, and so deliver up a man into the hand or power of temptation. Now this is what we pray, that the Lord would be pleased either to bear off assaults from us, and suffer us not to be tempted; or, if he let temptation loose upon us, yet, to give us the better, to order it so that it overcome us not. That which is here meant, by *leading* or *carrying us into temptation*, is, the prevailing of it, or leading us into a foil, and this we pray that he would not do; that, if he do bring us into the conflict of a temptation, he would not leave us there, but bring us fair off again. And thus the whole petition runs, *Lead us not, but deliver us.* And in this it is implied, that he would furnish us, with his own grace, the holy habits of grace to be within us, as a constant garrison; and then, that either he countermand our enemy from assaulting, or that they be such as overmatch not the strength he hath given us, but may be below it; or, that he send us the auxiliary strength of supervenient, assisting grace to that we have, that howsoever, the forces that come against us may be turned backward, and we may have the comfort, and he the glory, of our victories.

So, then, in this we are taught, 1. To know the danger wherein we are; that we live in the midst of enemies, and such as are strong and subtle; that we have the prince of darkness plotting against us, and the treacherous corruption of our own hearts ready to keep correspondence with him, and betray us to him; that he hath gins and snares laid for us in all our ways, *laqueos ubique, laqueos in cibo et potu*, as Augustine speaks—snares in our solitude and in our converse, and in our eating and drinking, yea, snares in our spiritual exercise, our hearing, preaching, prayer, &c., and therefore, as he here teaches us to *pray* against them, we must join that, [1.] To *watch* against them. [2.] To be sensible of our own weakness and insufficiency, either for avoiding or overcoming these dangers. [3.] To know the all-sufficient strength of God, his sovereign power over all adverse powers, that they are all under his command, so that he can keep them off from us, or subdue them under us, as he pleaseth; and so to have our recourse to this, and rest in it. The first of these considerations, if it take with us, will stir us up to watchfulness, and the other two will persuade to prayer: and these are the two great preservatives against temptation which our Savior prescribes; *Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation. Watch*—How can we sleep secure, and so many enemies that sleep not? If we pray and watch not, we tempt God, and we lead ourselves into temptation. It is our duty (mock the word who will), to walk exactly or precisely ἀκριβῶς, to look to every step, to beware of the least sins. For, [1.] they by multitude make a great weight. [2.] They prove usually introductions to greater sins. Admit but some inordinate desire into your heart, that you account a small matter, and it is a hundred to one but it shall prove a little thief got in, to open the door to a number of greater: as the Rabbins speak, a less evil brings a man into the hands of a greater.*

2. Avoid, not only sins, but the incentives and occasions to sin. As St. Chrysostom observes well that exhortation of our Savior, *When they shall say, here is Christ, and there is Christ*, he says not, *Believe them not*, but *go not forth to see.* And Solomon's instruction for avoiding the allurements of the strange woman, says not only, *Go not in*, but *come not near the door of her house.* The way of sin is *motus in proclivi*, down-hill: a man can not stop where he would; and he that will be tampering with dangerous occasions, in confidence of his resolution, shall find himself often carried beyond his purpose. If you pray, then, watch too. But as that word commands our diligence, so this imports our weakness in ourselves, and our strength to be in another; that as we watch, we must pray; and without this, we shall watch in vain, and be a prey to our enemy. Truly, had we no power beyond our own, we might give over, and be hopeless of coming through to salvation, so many enemies and hazards in the way. *Alas!* might a Christian say, looking upon the multitude of temptations without, and of corruptions within himself, and the weakness of the grace he hath, *how can this be? Shall I ever attain my journey's end?* But again, when he looks upward, and lifts his eyes above his difficulties, behold the strength of God engaged for him, directs his prayers to him for help, and is assured to find it; this upholds him, and answers all. There is *a roaring lion* that *seeks to devour*, but there is a strong rescuing lion, *The lion*

* *Levius malum inducit in manus gravioris.* Daus

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*of the tribe of Judah*, who will deliver. *The God of peace*, says the apostle, *will bruise Satan under your feet shortly*. Rom. xvi. 20. He says not, *we* shall bruise him under our feet, but *God* shall do it. Yet, he says not, he shall bruise him under *his own* feet, but under *yours*: the victory shall be ours, though wrought by him. And he shall do it *shortly*: wait a while, and it shall be done. And *the God of peace*, because he is the God of peace, he shall subdue that grand disturber of your peace, and shall give you a perfect victory, and, after it, endless peace: he shall free you of his trouble and molestation. Grace is a stranger here, and therefore hardly used, and hated by many foes; but there is a promise of a *new heaven and a new earth where dwells righteousness*: there it shall be at home and in quiet; no spoiling nor robbery in all that holy mountain.

*For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

This pattern, we know, is the line under which all our prayers ought to move: all our requests are to be conformed to it, and are certainly out of their way, when they decline and wander from it. And if we observe it, we may clearly perceive it is a circular line (as, indeed, the exercise of prayer is a heavenly motion, circular as that of the heavens); it begins and ends in the same point, the glory of that God to whom we pray, and who is the God that heareth prayer. In that point this prayer begins, and here ends in it; so that our requests which concern ourselves are cast in the middle, that all our desires may move within this circle:—though the things we pray for concern ourselves, yet, they are not to terminate in ourselves, but in him who is *Alpha* and *Omega*, the Beginning and the End of all things. We are to desire, not only the blessings of this life, but the blessedness of the life to come, more for his glory than for our own good.

This is genuine and pure love to God, in the pardon of our sins and salvation, to rejoice more in the glory of Divine mercy, than in our own personal happiness. Thus it shall be with us, when we shall be put in possession of it, and we ought to aspire to that measure of the same mind which can be attained here, while we are in the desire and hope of it.

*For thine is the kingdom.*] Though this clause is left out in divers translations, and wanting in some Greek copies, yet it is so agreeable to the nature of prayer, and to the perfection of this prayer, that we ought not to let it pass unconsidered.

There is in it an enforcement of our prayer; but especially, it is a return of praise. Good reason we should desire earnestly the sanctifying of thy name, and the coming of thy kingdom, and obedience to thy will, seeing these are so peculiarly due to thee, namely, *kingdom, and power, and glory*. And seeing thou art so great and rich a king, may we not crave with confidence at thy hands all needful good things to be bestowed on us, and that all evil may be averted from us; that we may find thee gracious to us, both in giving and forgiving; and as in forgiving us the guiltiness of sins, so, in freeing us from the power of sin, and preserving us from the power of our spiritual enemies that would draw us into sin? We are under thy royal protection, we are thy subjects, yea, thy children, thou art our king and Father; so that thy honor is engaged for our defence. Whatsoever sum our debts amount to, they are not too great for such a King to forgive; they can not rise above thy royal goodness, and whatsoever be our enemies, all their force is not above thy sceptre; though they be strong, too strong for us, yet, thou art much too strong for them, for *power* is thine. And this we know, that all the good thou dost us will bring back glory to thy name, and it is that we most desire, and that which is thy due; the *glory is thine*.

Thus we see all our grounds of argument for our requests are in God, none of them in ourselves: as we find this in the prayers of the prophets, *For thine own glory*, and *for thine own name's sake*. There is nothing in ourselves to move God by, but abundance of misery: and that moves not, but by reason of his bounty; so still, the cause of his hearing, and the argument of our entreating, are in himself alone. Were it not thus, how could we hope to prevail with him? Yea, how durst we offer to come unto him? It is well for us, there is enough in himself doth to encourage us to come, and to furnish us with motives to persuade him by, that we come not in vain. Moses had not a word to say for the people in themselves: such was their carriage, his mouth was stopped that way; yet, he doth not let go this, what wilt thou do with thy *mighty name?* It is true, they have trespassed, yet, if thou destroy them, thy name will suffer. Lord, consider and regard that. And we know the success of it. Thus, a Christian for himself may plead: "Lord, I am most unworthy of all those things I request of thee, but, whatsoever I am, thou art a liberal and mighty king, and it is thy glory to do good freely; therefore it is that I come unto thee: my necessities drive me to thee, and thy goodness draws me, and the poorer and wretcheder, I am, the greater will be thy glory in helping me."

But it is withal, an extolling and praising of the greatness of God, and so we are to consider it.

*Thine is the kingdom.* Other kings and kingdoms there be, but they are as nothing, they deserve not the naming, in comparison of thine. They are but kings of little molehills, to the bounds of thy dominion. The greatest kingdoms of the world are but small parcels, of this globe of earth, and itself altogether, to the vast circumference of the heavens, is as nothing—loses all sensible



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greatness. This point which men are so busy dividing among them with fire and sword, what if one man had the sovereignty of it all? He and kingdom both were nothing to thine; for sea and land, earth and heaven, and all the creatures in them all, the whole, all is thine. Thou art Lord of heaven and earth, and therefore, *the kingdom is thine.* As all other kingdoms are less than thine, so, they hold of thine, thine is supreme; all the crowns and sceptres of the earth hang at thy footstool. All kings owe their homage to this great King, and he disposeth of their crowns absolutely and uncontrolled as he will. He enthrones and dethrones at his pleasure, throws down one and sets up another; as we have a great monarch confessing it at length upon his own experience, being brought down from his throne, on purpose to learn this lesson, and was seven years in learning it. Dan. iv. 34.

*The power.* The creatures have among them several degrees and several kinds of power, but none of them, nor all of them together, have all power; this is God's. He is all-powerful in himself, primitively powerful. And all the power of the creatures is derived from him: he is the fountain of power. So that, whatsoever power he hath given unto men, or any other creature, he hath not given away from himself: it is still in himself more than in them, and at his pleasure he can call it back, and withdraw the influence of it, and then they remain weak and powerless. And when he gives them power, he useth and disposeth of both them and their power as seems him good. Therefore, his style is *The Lord of Hosts.* He can command more armies than all the kings and princes of the earth: from the most excellent, to the meanest of the creatures, all are his trained bands; from the host of glorious spirits, to the very armies of grasshoppers and flies. And you know, that as an angel was employed against the Egyptians, so likewise these contemptible creatures were upon service there too, and being armed with commission and with power from God, did perform the service upon which they were sent so effectually, that the wisest of heathens were forced to confess, *This is the finger of God.*

This is the Lord to whom we address our prayers, who can not fail in anything for want of power, for *He doeth what he will in heaven and in earth.*

*The glory.* In these two consists mainly the eminency of kings, in their power and their majesty; but they exceed not the meanest of their subjects, so far as THIS King surpasseth the greatest of them in both; Psalm xciii. 1; *Clothed with* both *majesty and strength.* They are often resisted, and cut short of their designs for want of sufficient power, and are (the best of them) often driven to straits; sometimes men, sometimes money or munition, or some other necessary help is wanting, and so their enterprises fall behind. But this King can challenge and defy all oppositions; *I work,* says he, *and who shall let it?* Isa. xliii. 13.

And as their power, so, their majesty and glory is infinitely short of his. *He is the King of glory,* as the psalmist styles him, Psalm xxiv. 10, alone truly glorious, both in the excellency of his own nature and the extrinsical glory that arises to him out of his works. Of the former, we can know but little here, for that *light* wherein he dwells is to us *inaccessible* (1 Tim. vi. 16); but this we know, that he is infinitely above all the praises even of those that do behold him. Likewise, how unspeakable is that glory which shines in his works, in the framing of the whole world, and in the upholding and ruling of it from the beginning! In which appear the two former that are here ascribed to him, *His kingdom and his power;* and so, this third, *His glory,* springs out of both. Then if we consider the glorious attendance that is continually about his throne, as the Scriptures describe it to us, it drowns all the pomp of earthly thrones and courts in their highest degree. See Rev. iv.

*For ever.* This kingdom, and power, and glory of God, besides their transcendent greatness, have this advantage beyond all other kingdoms, and power, and glory, that his are *for ever and ever,* all other are perishing, nothing but pageants and shows that appear for awhile, and pass along and vanish. It was a wise word of a king (especially at such a time), when he was riding in a stately triumph, and asked by one of his courtiers, thinking to please him, What is wanting here? he answered *Continuance.* Where are all the magnific kings that have reigned in former ages? Where is their power and their pomp? Is it not past like a dream? And not only are the kings gone, but the kingdoms themselves, the greatest in the world, have fallen to nothing; they had their time of rising, and again of decliuing, and are buried in the dust. That golden-headed image had brittle feet, and that was the ruin and break of it all. But this kingdom of the Most High is an everlasting kingdom, and his glory and power abide for ever.

Not only things on earth decay, but the very heavens *wax old as a garment,* says the psalmist, *but thou, O Lord, art still the same, and thy years have no end.*

Refl. 1. It is a thing of very great importance, for us to have our hearts established in the belief of these things, and to be frequent in remembering and considering them: to know that the kingdom is the Lord's, that he sovereignly rules the world and all things in it, and particularly the great affairs of his church: that he is the mighty God, and therefore, that there is no power, or wisdom, or counsel of men, able to prevail against him; and that in those things wherein his glory seems to suffer for the present, it shall gain and be advanced in the close.

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2. Let us always, and in all things, return this to him as his peculiar due: *Thine is the glory;* it belongs to thee, and to none other. *Deo quæ Dei sunt:* To God the things which are God's.

3. Let us think most reverently of God. Oh, that we could attain to esteeming thoughts of him, to think more of his greatness and excellency beyond all the world! It is our great folly to admire anything but God. This is because we are ignorant of him. Certainly, he knows not God, who thinks anything great beside him.

*Amen.*] In this word concentre all the requests, and are put up together: *so be it.* And there is in it withal, as all observe, a profession of confidence that it shall be so. It is from one root with those words which signify *believing* and *truth.* The truth of God's promising, persuades belief; and *it* persuades to hope for a gracious answer of prayer.

And this is the excellent advantage of the prayer of faith, that it quiets and establishes the heart in God. Whatsoever be its estate and desire, when once the believer hath put his petition into God's hand, he rests content in holy security and assurance concerning the answer; refers it to the wisdom and love of God, how and when he will answer; not doubting that whatsoever it be, and whensoever, it shall both be gracious and seasonable. But the reason why so few of us find that sweetness and comfort that are in prayer, is, because the true nature and use of it is so little known

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# EXPOSITION OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

EXODUS xx. 1, 2.

And God spake all these words, saying,
I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

IT is the character of *the blessed man,* and the way of blessedness, *to delight in the law of God.* Psalm i. 2. And because the eye is often upon that whereon the affection and delight of the heart is set, the sign of that delight in the law, is, to have the eye of the mind much upon it, *to meditate on it day and night.* And that we may know this is not, as the study of many things are, empty speculation and fruitless, barren delight, we are further taught that the soul that is fixed in this delight and meditation, is a tree well planted, and answerably fruitful. The mind that is set upon this law, is fitly set for bearing fruit. *Planted by the rivers of waters;* and is really fruitful, *Bringing forth its fruit in its season.*

If this holds true of the law in the largest sense, taken for the whole will of God revealed in his word, it is, no doubt, particularly verified in that which more particularly bears the name of *the law;* this same summary of the rule of man's life delivered by the Lord himself, after so singular a manner both by word and writ.

So, then, the explication of it being needful for the ignorant, it will be likewise profitably delightful for those who be most knowing and best acquainted with it. It is a rich mine, that we can never dig to the bottom of. He is called *the blessed man,* who is still digging and seeking further into the riches of it, *meditating on it day and night;* his work going forward in the night, when others cease from working.

We have in the creed, the object of *faith;* in the law, the sacrifice and trial of *love:* for *Love is the fulfilling of the law;* and, *If ye love me, keep my commandments,* saith our Savior. And prayer is the breathing of *hope,* or, as they call it, *Interpretatio spei.* Thus, in these three summaries, are the matter of these three prime theological virtues, *faith, hope,* and *charity.*

The law rightly understood, addresses us to the articles of our faith: for seeing the disproportion of our best obedience to the exactness of the law, this drives us to seek salvation in the gospel by believing; and our natural inability to believe, drives us to prayer, that we may obtain faith, and perseverance in it, at his hands who is both the first *Author and the Finisher of our faith.*

The preparation enjoined upon the people, teacheth the holiness of the law. The fire, and thunder, and lightning, and, upon these, the fear of the people, testify the greatness and majesty of the Lawgiver, and withal, his power to punish the transgressors of it, and his justice that will punish; that as he showed his presence by fire seen in delivering this law, so he is (as the apostle teacheth us, alluding to this) *a consuming fire* to them who neglect and disobey it. The limits set about the mount, that they might not approach it, even after all their endeavor of sanctifying and preparing, read [1] *humility* to us, teaching us our great distance from the holiness of our God, even when we are most holy and exact in our preparations; and [2] *sobriety* [φρονεῖν εἰς τὸ σωφρονεῖν], not to pry into hidden things; to hear what is revealed to us and commanded us, and to exercise ourselves in that. *Scrutator majestatis opprimetur à gloria.— Hidden things belong unto God, but those*

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*which are revealed to us and to our children, that we may do all the words of this law.* Deut. xxix. 29.

Lastly, we are taught, that the law of itself is *the ministration of death*, and hath nothing but terror in it, till the Messiah, the Mediator appear, and the soul, by his perfect obedience, be accounted obedient to the law. But we must not insist on this now.

The preface is twofold. I. That of Moses. II. That of God himself.

I. *God spake all these words.* Ten words. Exod. xxxiv. 28; Deut. v. 22. He added no more. Hence we may learn, (1.) The perfection of this law, that no more was needful to be added. (2.) The excellency of it, being so short, and yet so perfect. For as it is the excellency of all speech, as of coin (as Plutarch hath it), to contain much in little, most value in smallest quantity; so, especially of laws, that they be brief and full.

That we may the better conceive of the perfection of this law, we must not forget those rules which divines give for the understanding of it in its due latitude. (1.) That the prohibitions of sin contain the commands of the contrary good; otherwise, the number of precepts would have been too great. And, on the contrary, (2.) Under the name of any one sin, all homogeneous sins, or sins of that kind, are forbidden. (3.) All the inducements and occasions of sin, things that come near a breach, are to be avoided: that which the rabbins call the *hedge* of the law, is not to be broken. They who do always all that they lawfully may, will sometimes do more. (4.) It is spiritual, hath that prerogative above all human laws, that it reaches the heart and all the motions of it, as well as words and actions. This Supreme Lawgiver alone can see the behavior of the heart, and alone is able to punish all who offend so much as in thought. It were a vain thing, for men to give laws to any, more than what they can require account of and correct, which is only the surface and outside of human actions. But he who made the heart, doth not only give his law to it, but to *it* principally, and examines all actions there in their source and beginning; and therefore, oftentimes, that which men applaud and reward, and do well in so doing, he justly hates and punishes.

*God spake.* All that was spoken by his messengers the prophets, with warrant from him, was his word; they but the trumpets which the breath of his mouth, his Spirit, made to sound as it pleased him; but this his moral law, he privileged with his own immediate delivery. Men may give some few rules for society and civil life, by the dark light that remains in natural consciences; but such a rule as may direct a man to answer his natural end, and lead him to God, must come from God himself. All the purest and wisest laws that men have compiled, can not reach that: they can go no higher in their course, than they are in their spring. *That which is from the earth is earthly*, saith our Savior.

He added to this speaking, the *writing* of them likewise, himself, in tables of stone, that they might abide, and be conveyed to after ages. At first they were written in the heart of man, by God's own hand; but, as the first tables of stone fell and were broken, so was it with man's heart: by his fall his heart was broken, and scattered among the earthly perishing things which was before whole and entire to his Maker; and so, the characters of that law written in it, were so shivered and scattered, that they could not be perfectly and distinctly read in it. Therefore it pleased God to renew that law after this manner, by a most solemn delivery with audible voice, and then by writing it on tables of stone. And this is not all, but this same law he doth write anew in the hearts of his children.

Why it pleased him to defer this solemn promulgation of the law to this time, and at this time to give it to a select people only, these are *arcana imperii*—state secrets, indeed, which we are not to search into, but to magnify his goodness to us, that he hath showed us the path of life, revealing to us both the precepts of the law, and the grace and promises of the gospel.

It was the All-wise God who spake all these words; therefore he knew well his own aim and purpose in them, and doth certainly attain it.

It was not, indeed, that this law might be the adequate and complete means of man's happiness, that by perfect obedience to it he might be saved; for the law is *weak* for this, not in itself, but *through the flesh.* Rom. vii. 3. It is altogether impossible for it alone to save us, because impossible for us to fulfil it. But it doth profit us much if we look aright upon it.

1. It discovers us to ourselves, and so humbles us, frees us from the pride that is so natural to us in the midst of our great poverty and wretchedness. For when we see how pure the law is, and we, compared with it, to be all filthiness and defilement, *our best righteousness*, as Isaiah says, *as filthy rags*; this causeth us to abhor ourselves. Whereas naturally, we are abused with self-love, and self-flattery arising from it. The point of the law (as they in the Acts were said to be *pricked in their hearts*) pricks the heart, which is swelled and puffed with pride, and makes it fall low in sense and vileness.

2. As this discovery humbles us in ourselves, so it drives us out of ourselves. This glass showing us our pollution, sends us to *the fountain opened.* When we perceive that, by the sentence of the law, there is nothing for us but death, this makes us hearken diligently to the news of redemption and pardon proclaimed in the gospel, and hastens us to the Mediator of the *new covenant.* As the spouse was then singularly rejoiced to

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find her Beloved, when she had been beaten and hardly used by reproaching (Cant. v. 7), so the soul is then gladdest to meet with Christ, when it is hardest buffeted with the terrors and threatenings of the law. His promise of ease and refreshment sounds sweet after the thunderings and lightnings of Mount Sinai. A man will never go to Christ, so long as he is not convinced of misery without him, of impotency in himself, and in all others to help him.

3. It restrains the wickedness even of ungodly men. The *brightness* of it makes them sometimes ashamed of those works of darkness which otherwise they would commit without check; and the *terrors* of it affright them sometimes from that which they would otherwise commit without shame.

4. But chiefly it serves for a rule and square of life to the godly; *a light to their feet*, as David says, *and a lantern to their paths*. Either they have no rule of life (which is impious and unreasonable to think), or this is it. Christ came not to dissolve it, but to accomplish and establish it; and he did carefully free it from the injurious glosses of the Pharisees, and taught the right sense and force of it. See Matt. v. He obeyed it both in doing and in suffering; both performing what it requires, and, in our stead, undergoing what it pronounces against those who perform it not. It is a promise chiefly intended for the days of the gospel, as the apostle applies it, *I will write my law in their hearts*. It is a weak conceit arising upon the mistake of the Scriptures, to make Christ and Moses as opposites. No, Moses was the *servant in the house*, and Christ, *the Son;* and being *a faithful servant*, he is not contrary to the Son, but subordinate to him. Heb. iii. 5. The very abolishment of the ceremonial law, was not as of a thing contrary, but as a thing accomplished in Christ, and so was an honorable abolishment. And the removing of the curse and rigor of the moral law from us, was without wrong to it, being satisfied in a better for us, our surety, Jesus Christ.

They are happy, who look so on the law of God, as to be made sensible of misery by it, and by that made earnest in their desires of Christ; and who judge themselves, the more evidence they have of freedom from the curse of the law, to be not the less, but so much the more obliged to obey the law; who are still making progress and going on in that way of obedience, though it be with continual halting, and often stumbling, and sometimes falling; yet they shall certainly attain their journey's end, that perfection whereof they are so desirous.

This were the way to lowliness, not to compare ourselves with others, in which too many are often partial judges, but with this holy law. We use not to try the evenness of things with our crooked stick but by the straightest rule that we can find. Thus St. Paul: *The law is spiritual, I am carnal.* Rom. vii. 14. He looks not how much he was more spiritual than other men, but how much less spiritual than the law.

II. *I am the* LORD *thy God.*] That is the truest and most constant obedience, which flows jointly from reverence and love: these two are the very wheels upon which obedience moves. And these first words of the law are most fit and powerful to work these two; *Jehovah*—sovereign Lord, to be feared and reverenced—*thy God;* and then, *Who have brought thee out*, &c., who hath wrought such a deliverance for thee. Therefore, in both these respects, most worthy of the highest love.

This preface can not stand for a commandment, as some would have it; for expressly it commands nothing, though by inference it enforceth all the commandments, and is indeed so intended. Though it may be conceived to have a particular tie with the first commandment, which follows it immediately, yet certainly it is withal a most fit preface to them all, and hath a persuasive influence into them all; commanding attention and obedience, not in the low way of human rhetoric, but *stylo imperatorio*, in a kingly phrase, becoming the majesty of *the King of kings—I am Jehovah.*

Here we have three motives to obedience: 1. His universal sovereignty, *Jehovah.* 2. His particular relation to his own people, *Thy God.* 3. The late singular mercy bestowed on them, *Who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt.* Each of them sufficient, and therefore altogether most strongly concluding for obedience to his commandments.

1. *Jehovah.* Not to insist on the ample consideration of this name of God, of which divines, both Jewish and Christian, have said so much, some more cabalistically and curiously, others more soberly and solidly; this they agree in, that it is the incommunicable name of the Divine Majesty, and signifies the primitiveness of his being, and his eternity; that his being is not derived, but is in and from himself; and that all other being is from him; that he is from everlasting to everlasting in himself, without any difference of time, but, as eternity is expressed to our conceiving, *He who is, and who was, and who is to come*, ALPHA *and* OMEGA.

Now, it is most reasonable, that seeing all things, mankind, and all the creatures that serve for his good, receive their being from him, we should likewise receive laws from him.

His majesty is alone absolute and independent: all the powers of the world, the greatest princes and kings, hold their crowns of him, are his vassals, and owe obedience to his laws, as much as their meanest subjects, that I say not more, in regard to the particular obligation which their honor and eminency given them by him doth lay upon them.

*Jehovah.* What are the numerous styles

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wherein princes delight and glory so much, but a vain noise of nothing in comparison of his name, I AM? And in all their grandeur, they are low, petty majesties, when mention is made of this *Jehovah, who stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth, and formed the spirit of man within him?* Zech. xii. 1. What gives a man, when he gives all the obedience he can, and gives himself in obedience to God? What gives he him, but what he hath first received from him, and therefore owes it all, as soon as he begins to be?

This authority of the Lawgiver, is the very life of the law. It is that we so readily forget, and this is the cause of all disobedience, and therefore the Lord inculcates it often, Lev. xix., *I am the Lord*, ver. 3; and again repeated, ver. 37.

This is the apostle St. James's argument, by which he strongly proves his conclusion. *That he that transgresseth in one, is guilty of all.* He urges not the concatenation of virtues in themselves—though there is truth and force in that: he that hath one hath all, and so he that wants any one hath none:—but the sameness of the authority is his medium; *For he who said, Thou shalt not commit adultery, said also, Thou shalt not kill.* Jam. ii. The authority is the same, and equal in all. The golden thread on which these pearls are stringed, if it be broken in any one part, it scatters them all. This name of God signifying his authority, keeps the whole frame of the law together, and if that be stirred, it falls all asunder.

2. *Thy God.* Necessity is a strong but a hard argument, if it go alone. The sovereignty of God ties all, either to obey his law, or to undergo the punishment. But love is both strong and sweet. Where there sounds love in the command, and in the relation of the commander, there it is received and cheerfully obeyed by love. Thus then, *thy God*, in covenant with thee, can not but move thee.

We see, then, the gospel interwoven with the law, in *thy God*, often repeated, which is by the new covenant, and that by a mediator. God expects obedience from his peculiar people. It is their glory and happiness, that they are his. It adds nothing to him, but much every way to them. He is pleased to take it as glory done to him, to take him to be our God; and doth really exalt and honor those that do so, with the title and privileges of *his people.* If his own children break his law, he can not but take that worse.

3. *Who brought thee out of the land of Egypt.*] By the remembrance of their late great deliverance, he mollifies their hearts to receive the impression of this law.

Herein was the peculiar obligation of this people. But ours, typified by this, is not less, but unspeakably greater; deliverance from the cruel servitude of sin, and the prince of darkness. From these we are delivered, not to licentiousness and libertinism, but to true liberty, John viii. 36. *If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed.* Luke i. 74. *Delivered from the power of our enemies*—To what end?—*to serve him without fear* that terror which we should be subject to, if we were not delivered; and, *to serve him all the days of our lives.* And that *all*, if many hundred times longer than it is, yet were too little for him. It is not such a servitude as that of *Egypt*, from which we are delivered: that ended to each one with his life; but the misery from which we are redeemed, begins but in the fulness of it when life ends, and endures for ever.

The gospel sets not men free to profaneness: no, it is a doctrine of holiness, *We are not called to uncleanness, but to holiness*, saith the apostle. 1 Thess. iv. 7. He hath indeed taken off the hardness, the iron yoke, and now *his commandments are not grievous.* 1 John v. 3. *His yoke is easy, and his burden light.* And they who are most sensible, and have most assurance of their deliverance, are ever the most active and fruitful in obedience: they feel themselves light and nimble, having the heavy chains and fetters taken off. Psalm cxvi. 16. *Lord, I am thy servant; thou hast loosened my bonds.* And the comfortable persuasion of their redemption, is that *oil of gladness* which supples and disposes them to *run the way of God's commandments.*

## PRECEPT I.

### Thou shalt have no other Gods but ME.

THE first thing in religion is, to state the object of it right, and to acknowledge and receive it for such. This, I confess, is the intent of this first precept of the law, which is therefore the basis and foundation that bears the weight of all the rest. And therefore, as we said before, though the preface looks to them all, yet it looks first to this which is nearest it, and is knit with it, and through it to all the rest. The preface asserted God's authority as the strength of his law, and this first precept commands the acknowledgment and embracing of that his authority, and his alone, as God. And this is the spring of our obedience to all his commandments.

But before a particular explication of this, a word, first, of the *division* of this law; secondly, of the *style* of it. 1. As to its *division.* That they were divided, first, into two tables, and then into ten words or commandments, none can question. We have the lawgiver's own testimony clear for that. But about the particular way of dividing them into ten, and the matching of these two divisions together, there hath been, and still is, some difference. But this I will not insist on. Though Josephus, and Philo the Jew, would (to make the number equal) have five precepts in each table, yet, the matter of them is more to be regarded, and persuades the contrary; that those which concern *piety*, our duty to God, be in the first table, and those together

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in the second, which concern *equity*, or our duty to man. And the summary which our Savior gives of the two tables, is evidently in favor of this. And that those precepts of *piety*, those of the first table, are *four*, and they of the second, *six*, and so, that the first and the second, as we have them, are different, and make two, and the tenth but one, hath the voice both of antiquity and reason: as many divines on the *decalogue* do usually evince at large, which, therefore, were as easy as it is needless to do over again. The creed of the Romish church to the contrary, is plainly impudent presumption and partiality, choosing rather to blot out the law, than reform their manifest breach of it.

2. What I would say of the *style* of the commandments, is but in this one particular, briefly: We see the greatest part of them are *prohibitive*, or, as we usually call them, though somewhat improperly, *negative*. *Thou shalt not*, &c. This, as is observed by Calvin and others, intimates our natural bent and inclinement to sin, that it suffices not to show us what ought to be done, but we are to be held and bridled by countermands from the practices of ungodliness and unrighteousness.

*Thou shalt not have*, &c.] This order here —and so in the rest: I. The scope. II. The sense of the words. III. What it forbids. IV. What it commands. And these follow each upon the other; for out of the scope, the sense is best gathered, and from that, the breach, and the observation.

I. The scope. As the second commandment concerns the solemn form of Divine worship, that it be not such as we devise, but such as himself appoints; the third, the qualification or manner of it, not vainly and profanely, but with holy reverence; the fourth, the solemn time set apart for it, the sabbath; so, this first precept aims at somewhat which is previous to all these.

Many distinguish this and the second, *per cultum internum et externum, by the internal and external worship;* and a grave modern divine, espying some defect in that, doth it, *per cultum naturalem et institutum, by natural and instituted worship*. But I confess, both omit, at least they express not (it may be, they take it as implied), that which is mainly intended, the object of worship; that that Jehovah who gave and himself spake this law, be received and acknowledged for the only true God, and so, the only object of Divine worship. And this is that which he calls *Cultus naturalis, natural worship*, that primitive worship, the religious habitude of man to God, giving himself entire, outward and inward, to his service and obedience; for this is no other than to own him, and him only, for that *Deity* to whom all love, and worship, and praise, are due.

It is surely not so convenient to restrain this precept to inward worship only, for each precept binds the whole man to obedience; and therefore I would not give the first motions of concupiscence in general, for the sense of the tenth commandment, as we shall show when we come to speak of that. Certainly, even outward worship given to a false God, breaks this first commandment.

The scope, then, is briefly, that the ONLY TRUE GOD be alone acknowledged for what he is, and, as we are able, with all our powers and parts, inwardly and outwardly, that he be answerably adored; that we neither change him for any other, nor join any other with him, nor be neglective and slack in honoring and obeying him. So that, as we are particularly, by each several precept, instructed in, and obliged to, the particular duties of it, by this we are generally tied to give obedience to them all. It is no way inconvenient, but most fit in this general notion, that this first commandment import the observance of itself, and of all the rest.

II. The sense of the words, *Non habebis*, Heb. *Non erunt tibi*, &c.

1. *Erit tibi, Deus, Thou shalt have a God* Know and believe that there is a Deity. 2. Seek to know which is the true God, that thou mayest acknowledge him. 3. Know me as I have revealed myself in my word. Know and believe that I, Jehovah, the Author and Deliverer of this law, that I am God, and there is none else. Isa. xliv. 8. 4. Offer not, therefore, either to forsake me, or to join any other with me. Alienate no part of my due from me, for my glory I will not give unto another. 5. Take me for thy God; and give service and honor, and thyself unto me.

*Before my face.*] Set them not up in my sight, for I can not suffer them, nor their worshippers. If they come in my sight, they will provoke me to anger. The word here for *face*, sometimes signifies *anger*, in Scripture; and it seems to allude to God's clear manifestation of himself to his people in the delivery of the law, and further to clear the doctrine of pure and true religion shining in the law, which is, as it were, the light of the face of God. In which regard, the nations who knew him not, may be said not to have had their gods before his face; for though he saw them, they saw not him.

Again, *Before my face*, is as if he should say, If thine idolatry be never so secret, though it were but in heart, remember that it will be in my sight. Thou canst not steal away any of my glory to bestow anywhere else, so cunningly and secretly, but I shall espy thee. If thou canst have any other gods that I can not know of and see not, thou mayest; but if thou canst have none but I shall see them, then beware, for if I see it, I will punish it.

III. *Breaches* or *sins* against this commandment. We can not particularly name all, but some main ones.

1. That *inbred enmity*, that habitual rebellion which is in our natures against God συμφυὴς ἔχθρα, that *connatural enemy*, that takes life with us as soon as ourselves in the womb. —Τὸ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκὸς, *the minding of the flesh*.

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Rom. viii. 6. And the evidence of that, is, οὐκ ὑποτάσσεται. *It can not be ordered*, is ever breaking rank. Some even of those who bestow mourning upon sin, yet, do not often enough consider the bitter fountain, and bewail it. The wisest way to know things, is, following them home to their causes. Thus David, Psalm li. 5. *Behold I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived me.*

2. *Atheism.* Though there is in the consciences of all men an indelible conviction of a Deity, so that there have been few of those monsters found, *professed atheists;* yet, there is in us all, naturally, this of atheism, that by nature we would willingly be rid of that light, and quench that sparkle if we could. And all ungodly men do live contrary to it, and fight against it.

3. *The gross idolatry of the heathens;* their πολυθεοτηίς, making gods of beasts, almost of everything and beasts of themselves. *Nullus enim terminus in falso.* The writers of the primitive church have mightily and learnedly confuted them: but we will not stir this *dunghill.* The Scripture calls idols so: *Hillulim.*

4. *Witchcraft*, necromancy, and magical arts, which make a god of the devil.

5. Rome's *invocation of saints and angels.* Though they take never so much pains to clear it, they do but wash the blot more. Thus in the same matter, Jer. ii. 22: *Though thou take thee nitre and much sope, yet, thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord.* All their apologies take it not away, let them refine it never so much with pamphlets and distinctions; all they attain by spinning it so fine, is but to make it a part of the *mystery of iniquity.*

6. *Erroneous opinions concerning God*, and, generally, heresies in religion.

7. *Practical or interpretative atheism*, or *idolatry*, whether of the two you will call it; for it is both in the lives of the most, and the world is full of this; being such as declares they have no God, or that this God is but some base idol in his stead. Particularly, among ourselves, [1.] Gross ignorance of God, and no endeavor to attain the knowledge of him, though in the midst of the light and means of knowing. [2.] Universal profaneness flowing from this ignorance. Hos. iv. 1, 2, 3. The hearts of men, which should be the temples of God, are full of idols. Though we hide them in the closest corners, they are before his face: he sees them, lust, and pride, and covetousness. See Ezek. viii. Consider, that which you bestow most thoughts and service on, that which you are most affectionate and earnest in, is not that your God? And is there not something beside the true God, that is thus deep in the hearts of the most of us? Take pains to make the comparison; look upon the temper of your minds. To say nothing of much more time spent upon other things than on him, how ardent you are in other affairs which you think concern you near, and how cold in serving and honoring him! But, though in particular under-gods, in what serves their honor, they differ, all men naturally agree in the great idol, *self.* Every man is by corrupt nature his own god. Was not this the first wickedness, which corrupted our nature, *Ye shall be as gods?* And it sticks to it still. Men would please themselves, and have themselves somebody, esteemed and honored; and would have all serve to this end. Is not this God's right and due they give themselves, to be the end of all their own actions, and sacrifice all to their own glory?

IV. *What it commands.*

Now, by these we may easily gather the the contrary, what is the obedience of this commandment.* It is so to know the true God, this Jehovah, as to be persuaded sovereignly to love, and fear, and trust in him, to serve and adore him.

He is to be *feared*, for he is great. *Who would not fear thee, thou king of nations!* Jer. x. 7. To be *loved*, for he is good. And because both *great* and *good, only* fit to be *wholly* relied on and hoped in.

But love is all; it gives up the heart, and by that all the rest to the party loved; it is no more its own. Oh, that we could love him! Did we see him we should. It is his uncreated beauty which holds glorified spirits still beholding and still delighted. But we, because we know him not, if we have any thoughts of him, how short are they! Presently down again we fall to the earth, and into the mire ere we are aware. Therefore,

Set yourselves to know, and love, and worship this God. Labor that there may be less of the world, and less of yourselves, and more of God in your hearts; more settled and fixed thoughts of him, and delight in him. Think not that this is only for the learned, or only for some retired, contemplative spirits that have nothing else to do. He is the *Most High*, and service and honor are due to him from all his creatures; and, from his reasonable creatures, reasonable service; and what this is, hear from the apostle, and let his exhortation, or his entreaty, persuade you to it. Rom. xii. 1: *I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice* (and they are not living without the soul), *holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service;* and your truest obedience to this commandment.

* Though the graces are duties properly belonging to the commandment, some divines think fit to expatiate into the several commonplaces of them, in explaining this commandment; yet, I think it not so fit to dwell upon each of these herein; their full handling rather belonging to that place of divinity which treats of the head of sanctification and those infused habits of which it consists.

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## PRECEPT II.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth! Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them. For I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

THE first commandment binds us to acknowledge and worship the true God; this, to the true worship of that God.

As God is not known but by his own teaching and revealing himself, so he can not be rightly worshipped but by his own prescription and appointment. This is the aim of this second commandment, to bind up man's hands, and his working fancy that sets his hands at work, and to teach him to depend upon Divine direction for the rule of divine worship, and to offer him nothing in his service, but what he hath received from him in command. The prohibition is general; *Non facias tibi*, Thou shalt not devise anything to thyself in the worship of God. And under that gross device of images, and worshipping them, expressly named, are comprehended all other inventions and will-worship.

There is in the words, I. The *precept*. II. The *enforcement* of it.

I. The precept. 1. *Thou shalt not make.* Thou shalt not imagine, nor invent, nor imitate the invention of others. Thou shalt not make, nor cause to make. In a word, thou shalt be no way accessary to the corrupting of Divine worship, with any *resemblance* (or image), or *human device* at all: the *former* is a particular word, signifying the then most usual kind of imagery; but the *other* of a most large and general sense, is put for all kinds of similitude and representation. So that the dispute the church of Rome drives us into for her interest, in this matter, about εἰδωλον and εικων, is not only a mere *logomachy*, a debate about words, but altogether impertinent and extravagant, having no ground at all in the words of the commandment; the *former* whereof is more particular than either of these two, and the *latter* more general and comprehensive than either they or any one word we have to render it by.

*Of the things which are in heaven*, &c.] Because the vain mind of man had wandered up and down the world, and gone through all these places to find objects of idolatry; in heaven, the sun, and moon, and stars; on the earth, not only men, but beasts and creeping things, and fishes in the water, and made images of them to worship; the Lord is therefore particular in his countermand.

2. The second part of the precept is concerning their worship: *Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor serve them.*

The former word is more particular, specifying one usual sign or worship, the inclining, or *bowing*, of the body. The other, general: *Thou shalt not serve them:* i. e., Give them no kind nor part of religious worship at all, on whatsoever pretence.

Here again the popish writers make a noise with that distinction under which they think to shift the censure of idolatry. Call it what they will, λατρευειν or δουλεύειν, surely, it comes under the word in the original, which signifies religious service or worship. Neither can they ever find in all the Scriptures, that anything of that kind should be bestowed lower than upon the majesty of God himself.

This is then the tenor of the commandment. [1.] That no image or representation of God be made at all: as is expressed in many other scriptures, as giving the sense of this precept. [2.] Nor that any resemblance of any creature be made for a religious use. [3.] That neither to any creature, nor to any resemblance or image, be given any part of Divine worship, although it were with a pretence, yea, and intention of worshipping the true God in and by them: which, if it were a sufficient excuse, as the church of Rome dreams it is, certainly, the Israelites' golden calf, and many other the grossest idols that have been in the world, might come and find room to shelter under it.

II. *For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.*] This follows the other part, as the binding on, or enforcing of the precept by threatening and promise annexed. Particularly, there be these *five* things by which God describes himself here, to persuade obedience to this command: 1. His relation to his people—*Thy God.* 2. His power both to punish and reward—[*El.*] *The strong God.* 3. The exact regard he hath to his own glory and zeal, or jealousy for it—*A jealous God.* 4. The certainty and severity of his justice, punishing the transgressors of this his law on themselves and their posterity—*Visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children.* 5. The plenty and riches of his goodness to the obedient—*Showing mercy to thousands of them that love me.*

This commandment, and the fourth are longer than the rest, and more backed with argument, because the light of nature discerns less in these than in the rest; viz., the outward manner of the worship of God, and God's exactness in that, to be served not as we will, but as he himself sees fit, and concerning the time of it.

Of the first argument, from God's relation to his people, we heard before in the preface. Here it is repeated because it suits with the word that follows, *Jealous.* 1. *Thy God*—thy husband by particular covenant, and therefore jealous of thy love and fidelity to Me and my worship. 2. *El*—able to right Myself upon the mightiest and proudest offender. *Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?* says the apostle. *Are we stronger than he?* 1 Cor. x. 22; there joining these two together, as here they are, his *strength* and his *jealousy.* 3. *Jealous*—he is the Lord and



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husband of his people, and idolatry is therefore spiritual adultery; as they are often reproached with it under that name, by the prophets, Jer. iii. 1, *&c.* So that by that sin particularly, his anger is stirred up against them. The very contract of this marriage with his people we have, Exod. xix. 5.

*Visiting.*—As judges and magistrates use to visit those places that are under their jurisdiction, to make inquiry after abuses committed in time of their absence, and to punish them. 1 Sam. vii. 16. Thus, he who is always everywhere alike present, yet, because he doth not speedily punish every sin at the first, therefore when he doth execute judgment in his appointed time, then is he said to *visit*, and *search*, and *find* out that iniquity which, in his time of forbearance, he seemed to the ungodly, either not to see, or not to regard.

*The iniquities of the fathers upon the children.*] It is true, the prophet, correcting the perverse speech of the people of his time, affirms (Ezek. xviii. 20), that *the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father*, &c., to wit, he repenting and returning, and being no way culpable of the like iniquity, which the people then falsely presumed of themselves. But neither is it here said, that the godly children shall suffer for the sin of their ungodly parents or ancestors; but, because the sin of idolary, or false worship in any kind, doth as commonly and readily descend to posterity as any other, and there is scarcely any plea for false religion that takes more than, *It was the religion of our forefathers*, this kind of threatening may possibly for that cause be here particularly suitable.

But surely that is not all that is here intended, that if the children do continue in the sin of the parents, they shall be punished; but, that for so high a transgression as this, he may justly, and often doth in judgment, give the children over to the sins of their parents. His grace being free, and so, not being bound to his creature to furnish grace but where he will, they go on in the sin of their fathers, and bring upon themselves further punishment, not only temporal, but spiritual and eternal. It is not necessary for its verifying, that it be always so; for God, we know, hath converted many children of ungodly, yea, particularly, of idolatrous parents, and showed them mercy; but in that he justly may do thus, it is a just threatening, and that he often doth thus, it is a true threatening, although in mercy he deal otherwise where it pleaseth him.

*That hate me.*] What! this is so harsh a word, that nobody will own it; not the most dissolute and wicked, not the grossest idolaters. Yet, generally, the love of sin witnesses against men possessed with it, that they are Θεοστυγεῖς, haters of God. And particularly the love of idols and false worship, alienates the soul from God, and turns it to enmity against him. Men seem, possibly, to themselves, in false worship, humble and devout (Col. ii. 18); but it is to hate and dishonor the Divine majesty, to bring to him and force upon him, as it were in his own presence, in his immediate service, that which is most hateful to him.

*Showing mercy to thousands.*] Blessing them and their posterity, being their God, and the God of their seed. *Of them that love me and keep my commandments.* Who therefore obey me, because they love me, and testify they love me, by obeying me. This is a general truth, in regard of all the commandments, though more particularly to be applied to this to which it is annexed. This commandment forbids, 1. The making of any image or resemblance of God at all. Deut. iv. 15. *Ye saw no manner of similitude*, says Moses, *on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb.* So, Isa. xl. 25. *To whom will ye liken Me?*

2. The giving of any kind of religious honor and worship to any creature or created resemblance. Job xxxi. 27. Psalm cxv. The reason why men are so prone to both these, is, because they are so much addicted to sense, and their minds are so blinded, that they can not conceive of the spiritual nature of God. Therefore, being driven by conscience to some kind of worship and religion, they incline to have some visible object of it: the soul having lost its sight, leans upon the body, would make it up, and supply it by the eye of sense.

3. All superstition and *will-worship*, all self-pleasing ceremonies and inventions in the service of God. How pompous, and plausible, and devout soever they seem to be, instead of decoring, they do indeed deface the native beauty of Divine worship; and, as popish pictures on glass windows, they may seem rich and gay, but they darken the house; they keep out the light of saving truth, and obscure the spiritual part of the service of God.

4. All gross, material conceits, and apprehensions of God. Other particulars of prohibition may be reduced to this command; for this and the rest name but the main offences and duties.

Then it commands,

1. To learn, and carefully, and punctually to observe the prescription of God in every part of his own worship, and diligently to be exercised in it, as in hearing, prayer, sacrament, &c.

2. In worshipping him to have the purest spiritual notion of his majesty that we are able to attain to.

God deals by representing both his justice and his mercy to persuade his people to obedience; to drive them by fear of the one, and draw them by the sweetness of the other. Thus, pastors are to set both before their people. But as he delights most in the pressing of his mercy, and persuading by that, so, certainly, it is that which prevails most with

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his own children, and doth most kindly melt, and mould their hearts to his obedience.

*Showing mercy to thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.*] Although it be not perfect, yet, it is such a *keeping* of his commandments as flows from *love*, and therefore love makes up what is wanting in it; and *that* is not perfect, neither, in us here, and therefore, *mercy* makes up what is wanting in both. It is not such love and obedience as can plead for reward upon merit, but such as stands in need of mercy: and it is free grace and mercy that rewards it.

*Love me and keep my commandments.* These two are inseparable. No keeping the commandments without love; no love without keeping them. Try, then, the one by the other—the sincerity of your obedience by examining the spring of it, whether it arises from love; and try the reality of your love, whether it be active and fruitful in obedience.

You know how studious love is to please, how observant of their will whom it affects, preferring it to their own will, and desirous to have no will but the same: it makes hard things easy, and can not endure to have anything called difficult to it. Much love to God would do this; it would turn all duty into delight. Did we once know what this were, we should say with Augustine, *What needs threatening and punishment to those who love thee not? Is it not punishment enough, not to love thee?* If you would have all your obedience sweet and easy to yourselves, and acceptable to God, seek, above all things, hearts inflamed with his love.

## PRECEPT III.

**Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.**

The psalmist stirring up himself to the praises of God, Psalm lvii. 8, calls up his glory to it. *Awake my glory.* By *glory*, the Hebrew interpreters understand the *soul;* the *Septuagint*, and others, the *tongue;* so the apostle, following the *Septuagint*, renders it, from Psalm xv., Acts ii. 26. It suits well with both: the soul being the better part of man, far excelling the body; and among the parts of the body, the tongue having this excellency, to be the organ of speech, and so, the interpreter of the mind: and this difference from the beasts, as the soul is, may well partake of this honorable name, and be called man's *glory*.

But that which gives them both best title to that name, is that exercise to which he calls them, the praising and glorifying of their Lord and Maker. Then are they indeed our *glory*, when they are so taken up and employed; when the one conceives, and the other utters his glory.

And as it becomes them always to be one, as they have one name, the soul and the tongue to agree, so, especially, should the one name given them be answered by their harmony and agreement in his own work, for which chiefly they have that name, in giving glory to God. And it is that which this commandment requires; forbidding that which is the ignominy of man, both of his soul and of his tongue, and which degrades them, turns them out of the name of *glory*, to be called *shame* and *dishonor;* that is, irreverence, and the dishonoring of the glorious name of God; and therefore, on the contrary, commanding the reverent and holy use of his name and service, and that we always endeavor so to speak and think of him, and so to walk before him, as those that seek beyond all things, that his name may be glorified in us and by us. For, though false swearing and vain swearing are main breaches of this commandment (as we shall show afterward), being primarily forbidden by it, yet, it extends generally to all our speeches concerning God. Neither is it to be restrained there, and kept within that compass, as if it gave only law to the tongue; although, indeed, the tongue hath a very great share in it, both in the breaking and the keeping of it: yet, certainly the precept, in its full sense, goes deeper into the soul, and gives a rule to the speech of the mind, our *thoughts* concerning God; and larger, stretches itself forth to our actions and life, which hath as loud a voice, to those with whom we converse, as our tongues, and is the more considerable of the two—giving a truer character of men, what they are indeed, than their words can do.

The first commandment teaches and enjoins *whom* we shall worship. The second, *what* worship we shall give him. This third shows us with what disposition and intention, and answerably with what manner of expression, we shall worship him and use his name; that it be not vainly, and after a common, trivial manner, but in holiness and humility, and in desire of his glory.

So, then, this commandment concerns particularly that which is the great end of all the works of God, *The glory of his name.* He *made all things for himself* (Prov. xvi. 4), His works of creation for this end (Isa. xliii. 7); those of redemption, and his new creation of the elect world, all *to the praise of his glory.* Eph. i. 12. And for this end calls he us *from darkness to light* to *show forth his praises* or virtues. 1 Pet. ii. 9. This we are to intend with him: and this precept requires of us, that what he aimed at in all his works, the same we may intend in all ours. And this is an excellent thing, the holiest and happiest condition, to make God's purpose ours, and have the same end with him. Here it is particularly true, *Summa religionis est imitari quem colis: The main of religion is, to imitate him whom we worship.* Thus are we to live, and particularly, so to worship him and make mention of his name, that we be ever sensible of its worth and greatness, and so beware that we indignify it not, but al-

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ways seek to advance the honor and glory of it. And that is the very scope of this commandment.

There is in it, I. The *Precept* itself. II. The annexed *Commination*.

In the *Precept* consider, 1. What is his *Name*. 2. What it is to *take* it. What to take it *in vain*.

*The name.*] That is, [1.] the names that are given him in scripture, *Jehovah*, *Elohim*, &c. It was a foolish and profane shift of the Jews, who thought themselves free if they abused not the name JEHOVAH; and so they became superstitious in the forbearing of that, and licentious in the abuse of the rest, and in swearing by other things in heaven and earth, &c. Which, therefore, our Savior reproves, giving the true sense of this commandment, Matt. v. 34. And this is the nature of superstition, to make frivolous, undue restraints, by way of compensation for that profane liberty and looseness in the commandments of God, which is its usual companion. [2.] All the attributes of God, by which the Holy Scriptures set him forth to us. [3.] Generally, anything whatsoever by which God is made known unto us, and distinguished from all others, and by which we make mention of him, which are the uses of a *name*. In a word, that of St. Paul expresseth it fully and fitly, Τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ.

*Thou shalt not take.*] That is, thou shalt not take, or lift up, or bear. [1.] Not use it secretly by thyself, or within thyself, in thine own thoughts, without reverence; nor take it in vain. So, [2.] Not make mention of it, or express it to others, vainly; not lift up in vain. [3.] Not bear, not be called by it, or have it called upon thee; not profess it in in vain.

*In vain.*] That is, [1.] Falsely and dissimulately. [2.] Profanely. [3.] Unprofitably, to no person. [4.]. Lightly and inconsiderately, without due regard and holy fear.

II. The annexed *Commination*,

*He will not hold him guiltless.*] He will not clear him. The sovereign Judge, from whose hand no offender can escape, except he willingly set him free and absolve him. He will not absolve them who abuse his name. And it means further, he will not clear him; that is, he will certainly punish him, and do judgment on him as guilty. And this is the rather particularly here expressed, because men are subject foolishly to promise themselves impunity in this sin, thinking either that there remains no guiltiness behind it, but it passes as the words do; or, if there be any, yet, being but a matter of words, wherein the most usual and known breach of this command consists, that the guiltiness of them is so small, that any little excuse may wipe it off; that it is but inadvertence, or a bad custom, or some such thing. No, says the Lord, the Lawgiver himself, delude not yourselves; think not the honor and dishonor of my name a light matter; or, if you will, yet I will not think it so, nor shall you find it so: though you easily forgive and clear yourselves, I will not clear you, but will vindicate the glory of my name in your just punishment, which your sin of taking it in vain did abuse and dishonor, and you shall feel in that punishment that you are not guiltless, as you imagined. The name of God is *great*, and *weighty*, and *honorable* (as the same Hebrew word signifies both), and therefore, *qui assumunt vel attollunt*, as the same word here is—they who offer to *lift up* this weighty name lightly and regardlessly, it shall fall upon them, and they shall be crushed under the weight of it.

There are many questions relating to this commandment, handled and discussed by divines, as, of an oath, a vow, &c., which, for our purposed brevity, we will pass by; and only, according to our usual method, add some chief heads of the violation and the observance of this commandment.

It forbids, 1. All false swearing or perjury, which is to *take his name* after the grossest manner *in vain*, or *in mendacium*, as the word likewise signifies; to call Truth itself, the first Verity, to partake of a lie. But he *is not mocked*; for as the nature of an oath imports invocating him as the highest both witness and judge of truth, and punisher of falsehood, he always, in his own due time, makes it good on those who dare adventure upon that guiltiness in so high a sin.

2. Papal dispensation of oaths, which is a most heinous sin, and becomes *him* who is eminently called *The man of sin*. It is more than perjury; for it is a professed, avowed patrociny of perjury, together with an impudent conceit of a privilege and right to do so.

3. Equivocatory oaths, by which, if it were lawful, the grossest perjury might be defended; for there is nothing so false, but some mental reservation may make it true.

4. Abusing the name and the word of God to charms and spells.

5. Execration and cursing by the name of Satan, which is no other than invocating him.

6. Swearing by any creature.

7. Abusing and vilifying the glorious and holy name of God, by passionate, or by vain and common, customary swearing.

8. Swearing for ends of controversy, and in weighty matters, where an oath is lawful, yea, necessary, yet doing it without due reverence and consideration of the greatness of God and the nature of an oath.

9. The abasing of the word of God, either wresting it to defence of error, or making sport and jesting with it.

10. Scoffing and taunting at holiness and the exercises of religion.

11. Dishonoring the religion which we profess, by unworthy and unsuitable carriage of life.

12. Performing prayer, or any other religious exercise, only out of custom, without

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affection and delight, and holy regard of the presence and majesty of God in his worship. More might be added, which for brevity we omit.

Is it not the highest shame of Christians, to take pleasure to vilify and abuse that holy name of God, which saints and angels are blessing above, and which we hope (as we pretend) to bless with them for ever If any dare offer to excuse it by provocation or passion, who otherwise use it not; consider, what a madness this is, because man hath injured thee, thou wilt injure God, and be avenged upon his name for it? And you who plead custom, accurse yourselves more deeply: that tells, you are guilty of long continuance in, and frequent commission of, this horrible sin. Were the fear of God in men's hearts, it would prevail both above their passion and their custom. Did they believe this, that the Lord will not clear them in his great day, it would fright them out of their custom. Were there a law made, that whosoever were heard swear, should be put to death, you would find a way to break your custom. God threatens eternal death, and you fear not, because indeed you believe not.

It commands, 1. Generally the reverend and holy use of the name of God, and, particularly in case of necessity, by advised and religious swearing by his name, and his alone, in judgment, truth, and righteousness. 2. To consider his name often, to take it into our thoughts, to meditate on his glorious attributes, and on his words and works, in both which those attributes shine forth unto us. 3. To delight to make mention of his name upon all fit occasions, and to speak to his glory. 4. To adorn our holy profession of religion with a holy life, with wise and circumspect walking, that it may not be evil spoken of by our means. 5. That our heart and affection be in the service of God which we perform; otherwise how plausible soever the appearance and outside of it is, it is nothing but guiltiness within, a *taking of his name in vain*, who *will not hold him guiltless* who does so. 6. Above all exercises, to delight in the praises of God, which is most properly the exalting and magnifying of his name, the lifting up on high. The psalmist abounds in commending it: It is *good*, it is *comely*, it is *pleasant*. Oh! that we could resolve with him, Psalm xxxiv. 1, 2: *I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall be in my mouth continually. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord.* This is, as we can, to bear a part here with glorified spirits; and a certain pledge to us, that, after a few days, we shall be admitted into their number.

## PRECEPT IV.

**Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work. But the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do and work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.**

Among all the visible creatures, it is man's peculiar excellency, that he is capable of considering and worshipping his Maker, and was made for that purpose; yet being composed of the dust of the earth and the breath of God, a body and a soul, the necessities of that meaner part, while we are in this life, employ as much, and take up a great part of our little time. And in this regard God hath wisely and graciously set apart a day for us, one of each seven, to be appropriate to that our highest employment, the contemplating and solemn worshipping of his Majesty. This is the scope of this precept. Consider,

I. The precept itself. II. The reason of it, and motive to its obedience. The precept itself is first briefly expressed; and then, further explained and urged.

*Remember.*] This word used seems, 1. To reflect upon by-past omission and forgetfulness. For, though it was instituted in paradise, and was not now a new unheard-of thing to this people, as appears by Exod. xvi. 23, yet, it is like they were much worn out of the observation and practice of it, especially during the time of their captivity in Egypt. So then, it is renewed thus: keep holy this day which you know was so long ago appointed to be so—be not now any more unmindful and regardless of it. 2. Such a way of enjoining seems more particularly needful in this than in the rest, because it is not so written in nature as the rest, but depends wholly upon particular institution, which may also be the cause why it is so large, and the form of it alone, among all the ten, both negative and positive. *Thou shalt do no work*, and *remember to keep it holy.* 3. But the main reason of this *remember*, is the main thing or aim in this precept, as both the badge, and the preserver and increaser of all piety and religion. And therefore is it, that it is so often pressed in the books of the law, and in the sermons of the prophets to the people of God, and so often called a sign of God's covenant with them, and their mark of distinction from all other people. Exodus xxiii. 12, and xxxi. 13, 14. Levit. xix. 30; xxv. 2, &c. Jer. xvii. Isa. lviii. 13, 14, &c.

*The Sabbath day.*] It is called a day of rest from the beginning and original of its institution, God's rest; and from the end of its institution, man's rest; both which follow in the words of the command: the one is the example and enforcing reason of the other.

*That thou keep holy.*] God sanctified it by instituting it, and man sanctifies it by observing it according to that institution.

This sanctifying is [1.] In cessation from earthly labor. [2.] In their stead, to be whol-

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ly possessed and taken up with spiritual exercise, both in private and in public. The former is necessary for the being of the latter; that cessation, for this work; and the latter is necessary for the due being of the former; we can not be vacant and entire for spiritual service, unless we cease from bodily labor; and this cessation or resting from bodily labor can not be a sanctifying of this day unto God, unless it be accompanied with spiritual exercise.

In the following words, that part only is expressed, the rest or abstinency from work; but the other is supposed as the end of this—that they shall not do their own works, that they may attend upon God's, his solemn worship. And this is implied in that word, *It is the sabbath of the Lord thy God;* both of his own appointing, and for this end, this work, that he may be more solemnly worshipped. And likewise, the *antithesis* that seems to be in that word, *In six days thou shalt do all thy work*, imports, that on the seventh thou shalt do *God's*. Not so called, that any benefit arises to him by our service; no, our *goodness reaches him not at all.* Psalm xvi. 2. In that way, that worship, which is far above ours, that of the angels, can add nothing to him, for he is infinite. Even this work, sabbath-work, and all our prayers and praises offered to him, and all performances of his worship, they are *our* works, in respect of the gain and advantage of them: it comes all back to us. But his worship is *his* work *objectively*, he is the object of it; and *directively*, by particular prescription from himself; and if you will add, *effectively*, too, never done aright but by his own grace and assistance.

*Six days shalt thou labor.*] The command of due labor and diligence in our particular callings, is not of this place; it belongs properly to the eighth precept, and in some way to the seventh: here it is only mentioned premissively, and for illustration of this duty here enjoined. And further, there is under it a motive from abundant equity: seeing that God hath made the proportion thus, not pinched to us, but dealt very liberally in the time granted for our own work, what gross, not impiety only, but iniquity and ingratitude will it be, to encroach upon that small part he hath nominated and set apart for his service! This was a great aggravation of our first parents' first sin, that having the free use of all the trees in the garden beside, they would not bate that one which was forbidden them, in homage and obedience to him who had given them all the rest, and given them themselves, who a little before were nothing.

*Thou shalt labor six days.* Not so as in them to forget and take no notice of God, nor at all to call upon him and worship him, and think to acquit all by some kind of attendance on him on the sabbath. They who do so are most unsanctified themselves, and therefore can not sanctify the sabbath to God. Such profane persons do profane and pollute all they touch with their foul hands, for such be all profane hands lifted up to God in prayer The life of the godly is not a visiting of God only in his house on this day, but a daily and constant walking with God in their own houses, and in all our ways, making both our houses and our hearts his houses, his temples, where he may dwell with us, and we may offer him our daily sacrifices.

Only, the peculiar of *this* day is, that we may not divide it between heaven and earth, but it shall be wholly for the service of God, and no work at all to have place in it that may hinder that, and suits not with the sanctifying of it: for so we are to understand the word, *No manner of work.*

*Neither thou nor thy servant*, &c.] As each one is obliged personally, so, they who have command of others, are bound to bind them to observance of the precept, and the cattle to rest, because their labor is for man's use, and therefore his resting infers theirs; as, likewise their rest is for a passive conformity, that man may see nothing round about him but what may incite to the observance of this day; which was the reason, in solemn fasts, of the beasts' fasting likewise, for man's further humiliation. The *stranger*, if converted and professing their religion, the same reason for him as for all others within a man's house: and if a stranger to their religion too, yet they might, and ought, as is here commanded, oblige him to this part of outward conformity, cessation from work, which otherwise would be an offensive and scandalous sight; and withal, if they did any work for those with whom they dwelt, their share would be deeper in the sin, than of such a stranger not professing their religion.

*For in six days.*] It is not pertinent here to speak of the reason of this, why God made six days' work of that which he could have done in one instant. Here, it is only urged exemplarily, as the reason why God did sanctify this day, and why *we* should sanctify it. His rest, you know, is not of weariness, or at all of ceasing from motion, for *He faints not, neither is wearied*, as he tells us by the prophet, Isa. xl. 28; yea, he moves not at all in working. *Omnia movet ipse immotus:* All things, himself unmoved, are moved by him. But this *rest* is this: that this was the day that immediately followed the perfecting of the creation; and therefore God blessed it with this privilege (that is the blessing of it), that it should be to men holy, for the contemplation of God and of his works, and for solemn worship to be performed to him.

All the other precepts of this law remaining in full force in their proper sense, it can not but be an injury done to this command, either flatly to refuse it that privilege, or, which is little better, to evaporate it into allegories. Nor was the day abolished as a typical ceremony, but that seventh only changed to a seventh still, and the very next to it; he who is *Lord of the sabbath*, either himself

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mmediately, or by his authority in his apostles, appointing that day of his resurrection for *our* sabbath, adding to the remembrance of the first creation, the memorial of accomplishing the new creation, the work of our redemption, which appeared then manifestly to be perfected, when our Redeemer broke the chains of death, and arose from the grave; he who is the light of the new world, shining forth anew the same day that light was made in the former creation. This day was St. John, *in the Spirit*, taken up with those extraordinary revelations. Rev. i. 10. They were extraordinary indeed. And certainly, every Christian ought to be *in the Spirit*, in holy meditations and exercises on this day, more than the rest; winding up his soul, which the body poises downward, to a higher degree of heavenliness; ought to be particularly careful to bring an humble heart to speak to God in prayer, and hear him in his word, a heart breathing after him, longing to meet with himself in his ordinances. And, certainly, it is safer and sweeter to be thus affected toward *the Lord's day*, than to be much busied about the debate of the change.

The very life of religion doth much depend upon the solemn observation of this day. Consider, if we should intermit the keeping of it but for one year, to what a height profaneness would rise in those who fear not God, who yet are restrained, though not converted, by the preaching of the word, and their outward partaking of public worship. Yea, those who are most spiritual would find themselves losers by the intermission.

*What forbidden.*—1. Bodily labor on this day, where necessity unavoidable, or piety, commands not. 2. Sporting and pastime.* This is not to make it a sabbath to God, but to our lusts and to Satan; and hath a stronger antipathy with the worship of God, and that temper of mind they intend in it, than the hardest labor. 3. Resting from these, but withal resting from the proper work of this day, neglecting the worship of God in the assemblies of his people. The beasts can keep it thus, as we see in the precept. 4. Resorting to the public worship of God, but in a customary, cold way, without affection and spiritual delight in it. 5. Spending the remainder of the day incongruously, in vain visits and discourses, &c.

*How observed.*—1. By pious remembrance of it, and preparation, sequestering not only the body from the labor, but our souls from the cares and other vain thoughts of the world. 2. Attending upon the public worship of God willingly and heartily, as the joy and refreshment of our souls. Isa. lviii.; Psalm cxxii. 3. Spending the remainder of it in private, holily; as much as may be, in meditation of the word preached, and conference, in prayer, reading, and meditating on the great works of God, of creation, redemption, &c.

* Sabb. vituli aurei.

This is the loveliest, brightest day in all the week to a spiritual mind. These *rests* refresh the soul in God, that finds nothing but turmoil in the creature. Should not this day be welcome to the soul, that sets it free to mind its own business, which is on other days to attend the business of its servant, the body? And these are a certain pledge to it of that expected freedom, when it shall enter to an eternal sabbath, and rest in him for ever, who is the only rest of the soul.

## PRECEPT V.

**Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.**

The renewed image of God in man, or *the new man*, is made up of *holiness and righteousness*. Ephes. iv. 24. These two are that of which the whole law of God is the rule: the first table, the rule of holiness or piety toward God; the second, of righteousness or equity toward men. And of the commandments which concern the latter, the first aims at the preserving of that order which God hath appointed in the several relations of superiors and inferiors; that is the scope of this fifth commandment.

Daily experience teacheth us how needful this is, that God should give a particular precept concerning this; in that we see how few there are who know aright, either how to command and bear rule as superiors, or as inferiors, to obey and be subject. And there is one evil very natural to men, which misleads them in both, pride and self-opinion, which often makes superiors affect excess in commanding, and inferiors defective in due obedience.

Observe the order: it hath the first place in the second table: 1st. As being the rule of order and society among men, which is needful for the better observing of all the rest. And, 2dly, as in all authority, there is a particular resemblance of God, therefore it is fitly placed next to those precepts that contain our duty to himself. He is pleased to use that interchange of names with superiors which testifies this resemblance; not only to take theirs to himself, to be called a *father*, a *master*, a *king*, &c., but to communicate his own name to them, and call them *gods*. And where the apostle speaks of God as the *Father of Spirits*, he draws a reason from that obedience we owe to *the fathers of our flesh*, as the subordinate causes of our being. Heb. xii. 9.

There is in the words, I. The *precept*. II. The *promise*. And it is called by the apostle, *The first commandment with promise*. Ephes. vi. 2. For the last clause of the second commandment, though it imply a promise, yet, as is usually observed, it is general to the keeping of all the commandments; whereas this is appropriate. But again, *that* is a promise

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of mercy in general, *this* of one particular blessing. Further, that it is not formally a promise, though it implies one indeed, and is intended so: but it is set down by way of description of God, from his mercy and bounty to those who keep his precepts; as the clause foregoing it expresses his justice in punishing the rebellious.

*Honor.*] Under this is comprehended whatsoever is due to superiors, by virtue of that their station and relation to us: inward respectful thoughts and esteem of them, and the outward expression and signifying of it by the usual signs of honor, and by obedience and gratitude, &c.

*Thy father*, &c.] This relation is named for all the rest, as being the first and most natural; and also as being the sweetest and most affectionate superiority, and therefore the fittest to regulate the command of superiors, and to persuade inferiors to obedience. Magistrates are fathers for men's civil good in their societies and dwelling together; ministers, fathers for their spiritual good and society as Christians.

*That thy days may be long in th and.*] That it is said, *Which the Lord thy God shall give thee*, is peculiar to that people to whom this law was first delivered; but the substance of the promise being common, extends to all together with the precept.

This blessing of length of days is particularly fit for the duty; that they who honor their parents, who are the second causes of their life, should be blessed with long life.

This, as all other promises of temporal things, is ever to be taken with that condition without which they might change their quality, and prove rather punishments; but God always bestows them on his own, and therefore ought to be understood so to promise them, in so far as they are fit for them, and may be truly good in their particular enjoyment, and as they conduce to a greater good.

*It forbids*—1. All disobedience in inferiors to the just commands of those whom God hath placed in authority above them; stubbornness and rebellion in children against their parents, or despising and disesteem of them for their meanness in body, or mind, or estate. The precept is not, honor thy parents for their riches, or wisdom, or comeliness; but, honor them as thy parents, and because they are so. Against this command is all other disobedience or refractoriness of those who owe obedience; wives to their husbands, servants to their masters, people to their pastors, &c.

2. Superiors break it, when they abuse their authority to serve their pride. Their screwing it too high, is very unpleasant, a particular dishonor to God, and defaces the resemblance they have of him: it spoils their harmony, as a string too high wound up; and besides that, it is very dangerous, being the ready way to break it. As in magistracy and public government, tyranny is most observable, so there is petty tyranny in masters and parents, and husbands, in extreme harshness and bitterness, μὴ πικραίνετε, says the apostle, &c. Again, the precept is broken, when superiors walk unworthily, and so divest themselves of that honor which belongs to them.

*It commands*—First, that children give due respect and obedience to their parents; and that all who are subject to the authority of others, though they have not suitable deserving, give it to their station, in obedience to God who commands. For though they, personally considered, do not, yet certainly God deserves our obedience. And it is so much the purer to him, when, other incitements failing, yet we observe that which fades not at all.

All obedience to men is limited thus, that it be *in the Lord*, and with regard to his supremacy; and therefore no authority can oblige to the obedience of any command that crosses his. Authority is primitively and originally in God, and he gives not his glory to another. He gives not away any of his peculiar authority to man, but substitutes him; and our first tie is to God, as his creatures, and this is universal. The greatest kings are his vassals, and owe him homage, and no authority derived from him, can free us from that which we owe to himself. There is a straight line of subordination, and if superiors leave this, we are to adhere to it, looking directly to God, keeping our station. Some of the schoolmen think that the inferior angels therefore fell with the chief in their apostacy, because they looked so much upon him, that they considered him not in subordination to God, and so, *left their station*, as the apostle speaks, Jude 6.

Secondly, The duty of all superiors is, 1. To consider that their higher station is not for themselves, and for their own advantage, but for those who are in subjection to them: as the stars are set in the highest place, but are for the benefit of the inferior world, by their light and heat and influence: *Let them be for lights in the firmament of heaven, to give light upon the earth.* Gen. i. 15. 2. Let them always remember, to command *in God* and *for him;* to prefer his honor to their own; and seeing he gives command concerning theirs, that they make it serviceable for the advancing of his. For, to this purpose hath he given them authority, and given command that they be honored; and his promise is, to *honor those that honor him, but they that despise him, shall be despised.* 1 Sam. ii. 30. This many superiors have felt, because they would not believe it and take notice of it.

Would parents teach their children to know God, and honor and obey him, this were the surest and most effectual way to make them obedient children to them. If they teach them to obey God, you see, he commands them to obey their parents; and therefore, in obedience to him, they will do so.

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## PRECEPT VI.

**Thou shalt not kill. Or, Thou shalt do no murder.**

THE world was at first perfect harmony, but sin made the breach at which discord entered, enmity between God and man, and enmity between man and man. As the sin that hath poisoned man's nature makes him a rebel to God, so it makes men tigers and wolves one to another; and that same serpent that at first envenomed our nature, doth still hiss on wretched men, both to disobedience against God, and enmity and cruelty against one another. We see how soon this evil followed upon the former: the first parents disobeyed God, and the first children, the one killed the other. In opposition to this evil, God hath given this to be one of his ten precepts, *Thou shalt not kill.*

Having given a rule touching the particular relations of men, the following commandments of the second table concern the general duties of all men, one to another; and this sixth regardeth his being or life.

*Not kill.*] This ties not up the sword of justice, which is in the magistrate's hand, from punishing offenders, even with death those that deserve it; but rather calls for the use of it. *not being to be carried in vain*, as the apostle says, Rom. xiii. 4: not a gilt sword only for show, but to be drawn and wielded for the execution of justice; both that in the just punishment of sin [Κόλασις], the sinner may eat of the fruit of his own ways, and so, God the Supreme Judge and Fountain of justice may be honored [Τιμωρια], and that by that example [Παραδειγμα], others may be terrified from the like offences. And thus, just killing by the sword of the magistrate is a main means of the observing of this commandment among men, *Thou shalt not kill.*

By the like reason is just war likewise freed from the breach of this commandment. But,

The scope of the precept being the preservation and safety of the life of man, and guarding it from violence, it is evident that all injury to our neighbor's life, our own not excluded, is *forbidden;* and not only the heinous fault of murder, which human laws do punish, but all the seeds and beginnings of this sin in the heart, to which principally, as the fountain of our actions, the spiritual law of God is given: as the authentic interpretation of our Savior teacheth, Matt. v., and particularly touching this commandment, verse 21, &c.

1. All fixed hatred of our brethren is forbidden, as the highest degree of heart-murder. *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart.* Levit. xix. 17. And, *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.* 1 John iii. 15; and he adds, *Ye know that no murderer hath life eternal abiding in him.* So then, he is in a woful deadly condition, in whose heart this hatred dwells. This is an infernal kind of fire, like your fires under grou[illegible], that can not be quenched. So far is it from the temper of any truly spiritual and heavenly mind, to be subject to it, that there is not anything more contrary to the Spirit of God, and the work of his grace, than the spirit of malice. And although it never break forth to revenge, yet, if the heart rejoice when evil befalls those it dislikes, although it come from another hand, God accounts it as if he who is glad at it, had inflicted it and been the worker of it. Therefore Job protests thus, that he *rejoiced not at the destruction of him that hated him, nor lift up his soul when evil found him.* Job. xxxi. 29.

2. Rash anger, either that which is altogether without just cause, or which upon some just cause, arises to an undue measure. And is not this the ordinary disease of the greatest part—an habitual bitterness of spirit, that is put out of its seat and troubled with every trifling cause, peevishly stirred up with the shadow and imagination of a wrong, where none is done?

3. The vent of these passions of envy and hatred, or sudden rash anger, by railing, and strife, and bitter speakings, by scoffs and taunts, by whisperings and detraction, which are the common exercise of base and unworthy spirits.

This commandment *requires* that, to the avoiding and forbearance of all injury to the life of our neighbor, we add a charitable disposition and desire of preserving it, and do accordingly act that charity to our utmost power, to the good and comfort of his life; using toward him meekness and patience, clemency and beneficence; doing him good, supplying his wants, as we are able. For it is cruelty to the life of our poor brethren, to be straight-handed toward them in the day of their necessity and our abundance, at least, of our comparatively better estate. 1 John iii. 17.

But we think we do much this way, when, upon right trial, we should find ourselves exceedingly defective. We look upon our few and petty acts of charity with a multiplying glass, and see one as it were ten. Who almost are there, that will draw somewhat from their excesses, to turn into this channel? that will abate a lace from their garment, or a dish from their table, to bestow upon the necessities of the poor? In a word, we ought not only to be free from hurting, but be *a tree of life to our neighbor.*

Let us then be convinced of our guiltiness in the breach of this precept. Men think it much if they can forgive, upon the acknowledgment and submission of those who have injured them; but they aspire not to this, cordially to forgive those who still continue to wrong and provoke them, to compassionate them, and pray for them, and repay all their evil with meekness and good-will. We consider not how sublime the rule of Christianity is, and how low our spirits are, and how far off from it. *Be not overcome of evil,* says the apostle, *but overcome evil with good.* Rom.



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xii. 21. It is easy to overcome a man who resists not, but yields; to pardon injury when it ceaseth, and entreats pardon; but when it holds out, and is so stout as still to fight against that goodness and meekness which it meets withal, yet, the Christian ought to persist in these, and overcome it with good. And see our Savior's rule to them who will be his disciples, against hatred and wrath, Matt. v. 44. Labor for humble spirits. Pride is the spring of malice and desire of revenge, and of rash anger and contention. This makes men easily swell against anything that crosses them, because they have laid down this with themselves, that they deserve to be observed and respected, and not crossed at all; and when they find it otherwise, it kindles them to anger. And it is not the degree of provocation, but the different temper of men's spirits, makes them more or less subject to anger. It matters not how great the fire be, but where it falls.

Consider, 1. That these turbulent passions carry their punishment along with them: they rankle and fester the soul, and fill it full of pain and disturbance. Whereas the spirit of meekness makes the soul of a Christian like the highest region of the air, constantly calm and serene. The apostle speaking of this commandment of love, says, that *the commandments of God are not grievous*. 1 John v. 3. Certainly, there is such a true pleasure in meekness, forgiving of injuries, and loving our very enemies, that did men know it, they would choose it for the very delight and sweetness of it, though there were no command to enforce it.

2. Consider, particularly against rash anger, how weak and foolish a thing it is. *Anger resteth in the bosom of fools*, saith Solomon. Eccl. vii. 9. A fool's breast is the very natural place of anger, where it dwells. But, as he says elsewhere, *A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit*. Prov. xvii. 9. The word is, *a cool spirit*. What a senseless mistake is it for men to think it strength and greatness of spirit, to bear nothing, to be sensible of every touch, and to stand upon their punctilios! Is it not evident weakness, to be able to suffer nothing? We see the weakest persons most subject to anger—women, children, and the sick, and aged persons; old age being both a continued sickness, and a childishness, as they call it, and as the dregs of a man's life turned into vinegar: it is the weakness of all these that makes them fretful.* In a word, it is *the glory of a man to pass by a transgression*. Every one can be angry, and most are they who are weakest; but to be above it, and have it under command, is the advantage of those who are truly wise, and therefore, worthy or our study to attain it.

3. That which should most prevail with Christians to study love and meekness of spirit, and a propension to do good to all, is, the conformity that is in this temper to our Head and Redeemer, Jesus Christ—to partake of his dove-like Spirit. *Learn of me*, says he, *for I am meek and lowly in heart. The fruit of the Spirit is love*. Gal. v. 22. And this he hath given as the commission and badge of his disciples, that, as he loved them, so they love one another. John xiii. 35.

* *Omne infirmum naturâ querulum*

## PRECEPT VII.

**Thou shalt not commit adultery.**

As the perverseness of nature hath found out crooked ways, and sinful abuses of things that we enjoy and use, the holy law of God aims at the rectifying of these abuses, and the bounding and limiting of our ways by a strait rule.

And this precept particularly debars us from all sinful uncleanliness, under the name of one kind of it; that, answerably to our condition or estate of it, whatsoever it is, single or married, we ought to endeavor that cleanness and purity of soul and body, that become the temples of the Holy Ghost.

I purpose not to reckon up particularly the several sorts and degrees of sin of this kind; for chastity is a delicate, tender grace, and can scarcely endure the much naming of itself, far less of those things that are so contrary to it. Though in the law of God, given to the people of the Jews, there is express mention of the gross abominations of this kind, because practised by the Gentiles, and to be forbidden them; and though the apostle writing to the Gentiles newly converted from those abominations, of necessity mentions particulars of them; yet, further than that necessity of reproving them where they are in custom requires, he hates the very naming of them. Eph. v. 3–12. As the old Roman satirists, while they seem to reprove vice, rather teach it by their impudent descriptions of it: the new Roman casuists, some of them, are as foul that way.

It may suffice to regulate us in this, if we believe this truth, that whatsoever is in this kind, besides the lawful use of marriage, is a breach of this holy law of God, whether it be in action or in words, or so much as in thought. And if this be true—as it is, if we believe truth itself, our Savior's interpretation—that an unchaste look, or thought, makes a man guilty, then, surely, whatsoever is beyond these is more grossly sinful.

What a shameful thing it is that our holy profession of religion should be so dishonored by the abounding of uncleanness among us! In many, it breaks forth scandalously; and if there be any who live in that way of wickedness undiscovered, and walk secretly in it, yet, the pure Lord who perfectly sees and hates it, will call them to account, and *judge them*, according to the apostle's word, Heb. xiii. 4. Consider this likewise, any of you who have not lamented your former impure conversation but being reformed outwardly,

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by your years or condition of life, yet never have inwardly repented, and been deeply humbled for the sins of your youth. True conversion is not so light a work. David remembers his former sins, and prays earnestly that God would not remember them against him. Psalm xxv. 7. And on the contrary, you who think not on them, may justly fear that God will remember them, because you yourselves have forgot them.

They who give their tongues the liberty of scurrilous jesting and impure speeches can not but have filthy hearts: their noisome breath argues rottenness within.

Yea, they who proceed no further in uncleanness than to entertain and lodge the fancies or thoughts of it, rolling them on their beds, and delighting in them, even such are exceedingly guilty and abominable in the sight of God, who doth not only see into the heart, but most of all eyes and regards it. *Keep thy heart with all diligence*, says Solomon, *for from thence are the issues of life.* Prov. iv. 23. Certainly, they who can dispense with themselves in these inward heart-uncleannesses and find no remorse, can not think the Spirit of God dwells within them; for, if he were there, he would be showing his discontent and anger against that unholiness which is so contrary to him.

And this, they who have any truth of grace will find, that if they be not either free from the assaults, or at least, if those filthy birds, such impure thoughts, be not perfectly beaten away when they light on the soul, if they stay but any time with them, although they afterward do chase them out with indignation, yet they do leave such a stain as grieves and saddens the Holy Spirit in them, and for a time they find it not act in prayer, and in spiritual comfort, so cheerfully as before. *Let no corrupt* (or rotten) *communication proceed out of your mouth*, says the apostle, *and grieve not the Holy Spirit.* Eph. iv. 29. Rotten speech grieves the Holy Spirit, and so do such thoughts too, which are man's speech with himself, and therefore being most familiar and frequent with him, ought to be most regarded and watched over. There is not anything will more readily dry up the sweetness and spiritual moisture of the soul, and cause the graces in it to wither, than the impure fire of lust. Therefore, you who have any beginnings of grace, and would have it flourish, beware of this, and quench it in its first sparkles; if you do not, it may in a little time, rise above your power, and still prove very dangerous.

If you would be freed from the danger and importunity of this evil, make use of these usual and very useful rules. [1.] Be sober and temperate in diet: withdraw fuel. [2.] Be modest and circumspect in your carriage. Guard your ears and eyes, and watch over all your deportment. Beware of undue and dangerous familiarities with any, upon what pretence soever. [3.] Be choice in your society, for there is much in that. [4.] In general, flee all occasions and incentives to uncleanness. But truly, the solid cure must begin within: otherwise, all these outward remedies will prove but *empiric* medicines, as they call them.

1. First, then, lean not upon moral resolves and particular purposes against uncleanness, but seek a total, entire change of the heart, and to find the sanctifying Spirit of grace dwelling within you.

2. Labor to have the heart possessed with a deep apprehension of the holiness and purity of God, and then of his presence and eye upon all thy actions, yea, thy most secret thoughts. His eye is more piercing than that any wickedness can be hid from him, and more pure than to behold it without indignation. The darkness is as noon-day to him. I can not steal a thought out of his sight, though it be never so sudden and short. Then think, If I pretend to communion and converse with my God, he is all holiness, therefore uncleanness can never attain that to which I aspire. *What communion hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial?* And shall I lose or hazard the sweetness of his presence for so base a delight? How can I offer that heart to him in prayer, which hath been wallowing in the mire of unclean practice or imagination? Resolve to drive out the assaults which you are incident to: How shall I do, or think thus? My holy God is looking on me. This was Joseph's preservation, *Shall I do this evil, and sin against God?*

3. Acquaint yourselves with spiritual delights, and this will make a happy diversion from those which are sensual and earthly. Somewhat a man must have to delight in. It is the philosopher's remark, that they who know not the true pleasure of the mind, turn to the base pleasures of the body.

Some moral men, seeking the higher delight of the mind, in their way have persuaded themselves to a generous disdain of their bodies. How much more powerfully may supernatural delights of the soul, righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, wean it from these gross, sensual pleasures, which the beasts have in common with us; at least from the immoderate desire and all unlawful pursuit of them! Nothing indignifies the soul more than lust. When David had sinned this way, it had so made havoc of grace within him, that he cries not only for cleansing, but for a new creation, as if all were undone; *Create in me a clean heart.* He found it so slavish and ignoble a sin, that he prays to be re-established by God with *a free* (or noble) *spirit.* Psalm li. 10, 12.

4. Increase in the love of Christ. For, as that grows, there is a decrease of the love of sin, yea, of the immoderate love of all inferior things; as the sun-beams eat out the fire, this Divine and heavenly love consumes the other. All our love is too scarce or poor for him,

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when it is collected and drawn altogether to run only toward him; and therefore there is none to spare upon the flesh and the lusts of it, nor upon any creature, but as he allows and appoints. The sense of his love takes up the whole soul, and he lodging in it, is that true *agnus castus* that makes it chaste—that bundle of myrrh that hath a virtue to preserve the Christian from the corruptions of lust.

That love of Jesus Christ is strong as death, kills all opposite affections; and indeed, it alone is worthy of the soul, the noble, immortal soul. Oh, how is it abased, when it is drawn down to sensuality, and so made a slave to its servant, the flesh! *Major sum, et ad majora genitus*, could a Roman philosopher say, *quàm ut sim mancipium mei corporis: I am greater, and born to greater things, than to be a slave to my body.* How unworthy is it, that being capable of the highest good, the fruition of God, we should forget ourselves so far as to serve vile lust, and forfeit the happiness and pleasures of eternity. Far be it from us. *God hath called us to holiness, and not to uncleanness*, says the apostle. 1 Thess. iv. 7.

Flee all unlawful and forbidden delights. And those that are lawful, do not engage your hearts to them, love them not immoderately; and they can scarcely be loved without excess, if loved at all. Shall I say then, If you use them, yet love them not, reserve that for purer enjoyments? Says not the apostle this? 1 Cor. vii. 30. *Let them that rejoice, be as if they rejoiced not;* and, particularly, *they that marry, as if they married not.* And his reason is weighty: *For the fashion of this world passeth away.*

Remember to what a pure and excellent condition we are called as Christians, and with what a price we are bought to be holy; and let it be our firm purpose and study to glorify God in our souls and bodies, for they are his.

## PRECEPT VIII.

### Thou shalt not steal.

God is the God of order, and not of confusion: it is he that hath authorized and appointed peculiarity of possessions unto men, and withal, that society and commerce among them which serves for their mutual good. And property reserved makes one man, in what he possesses, useful and helpful to another. And he hath given this precept of his law, to regulate them in these things, to be the rule of that which we call *contentation* or *justice*, equity toward our neighbor, in the matter of his goods or proper possessions.

This, then, being the scope of the commandment, whatsoever breaks this hedge, is, as comprehended under the name of *theft*, here forbidden:—all manner of injustice and wrong done to our neighbor in his estate, whether by violence or by sleight of hand, by force or fraud, yea, if it be but so much as in affection or desire; for (as we have often said) the law is spiritual, and binds not only the hands, but the heart. So, then, not only gross robberies and thefts are here forbidden, but all oppression and extortion in superiors, all purloining and unfaithfulness in inferiors; too strict exaction in masters, and slothfulness in servants, or whatsoever else may tend to their master's damage; all bribery and receiving of gifts, to the perverting of justice; all deceit and over-reaching in commerce, or trading, or bargaining; taking advantage in buying or selling, or any contract, upon the ignorance or simplicity of those we deal withal; all desire and seeking of our neighbor's loss to our gain; all the degrees of sacrilege and simony: all idleness and neglect in men's particular callings, by which they either impoverish themselves, and are *worse than infidels, not providing for their families* (1 Tim. v. 8), or, if they have certain provision by their callings, in neglecting the duties of them, they wrong those from whom, or for whose sakes they are so provided, as magistrates and ministers, who have, or should have, honorable maintenance for their public service, the one in the commonwealth, the other in the church. As it is a great sin to curtail or detain what is due that way, so it is no less wickedness in them, if they be remiss and careless of those duties to which they are obliged for the public good. In a word, whosoever can digest any kind of undue gain to themselves, or do any prejudice to their neighbor in the least, are guilty. Yea, they sin against this precept, who do not with all their power further the advantage and good of their neighbor in his outward condition; who do not help and relieve those they see in want, so far as their ability reaches.

There is a kind of right that the poor have to supply; it is not merely arbitrary to you. Though they have not such a right as to take it at their own hand, or to seek it at the houses of human justice, yet, they have such a right as that your hand ought not to detain it. *Withhold not good from them to whom it is due.* Prov. iii. 27. Which is evidently meant (and interpreters take it so) of all kind of doing good, even that of charity and beneficence to the needy, as appears by the following clause, *When it is in the power of thine hand to do it.* And the Septuagint reads ὑστεῖν τὸν ὀφεί. It is due; they have a right to it; though not such as they can implead for before men's courts or judicatures, yet, in the court of conscience, and in the sight of God, it is duly theirs. The word is from him who is Lord of it. *Esurientium panis est qui apud te mucescit, et sitientium potus qui apud te acescit.* [Ambrose.] *It is the bread of the hungry that moulds by thee, and the drink of the thirsty that sours by thee.* Although thou art in possession, hast superfluity by thee, what he wants is his by right; he is lord of it; for the Lord of all

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hath turned over his right to thy poor brother. The Lord himself needs it not; thy goodness can not reach him. He hath furnished thee with such as need it, and may be his receivers, and have warrant from him to take it up in his stead. And be sure he will acknowledge the receipt of it: thou hast his own word and writ for it, a bill of exchange under his own hand, that what you give to the poor, be put upon his accounts. *He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord, and he will repay it.* Prov. xix. 17. And again, *In that you did it unto one of these,* says our Savior, *ye did it unto me.* Matt. xxv. 40. It is the surest and most lasting part of a man's estate, that is put into their hand. *Quas dederis solas semper habebis opes. Thine alms alone, of all thy wealth, thou shalt possess for ever.* If God be *solvendo,* if he be a sufficient debtor, it is treasure laid up in heaven.

So then, this precept requires uprightness and equity in all our dealings; a desire to right and advantage our brethren as ourselves, willing their gain and prosperity as our own; diligence and industry in our callings, and giving to all others their due. Though men are not obliged to a sottish simplicity: but ought to endeavor so to understand their affairs, that they may avoid circumvention by others' craft; yet a prudent simplicity is the right stamp of a Christian mind, to be single and ingenuous, and rather to suffer loss from others, than to cause them any. In a word, the apostles' rule is express and full; 1 Thess. iv. 6: *That no man over-reach or defraud his brother in any matter:* and he adds a very forcible reason, *Because the Lord is the avenger of all such; as we have also* (says he) *forewarned you and testified.* Men are ready to find out poor shifts to deceive themselves, when they have some way deceived their brother, and to stop the mouth of their own conscience with some quibble and some slight excuse, and force themselves at length to believe they have done no wrong. Therefore, the apostle, to fright them out of their shifts, sets before them an exacter judge, who can not be deceived nor mocked, who shall one day unveil the conscience, and blow away these vain self-excuses as smoke; and that just Lord will punish all injustice: *He is the avenger of all such.*

At the first view, a man would think the breach of this commandment concerns but few persons, some thieves and robbers, and some professed deceivers, or if you add some cozening tradesmen and merchants; but the truth is, there is scarcely any one of the commandments so universally and frequently broken, and whereof the breach is so little observed, and therefore, so seldom repented of by the greatest part. As the Apostle James says, *He is a perfect man who offends not in his words,* truly, he is a rare man who offends not, and that remarkably (if men would remark themselves), against this commandment, *Thou shalt not steal.*

To say nothing of the oppression and hard exactions of such as are superiors of lands, grinding the faces of the poor, and squeezing them till the blood come, and so putting in the same blood of the poor, among their estates, which many times proves a canker to all the rest; and the thievishness of servants, and of the poorer sort, making no conscience at all of whatsoever they can filch from their masters, or those that are richer than they, counting all they can snatch good booty and lawful prize: to pass by, likewise, the particular deceits which are usual in several callings, and are incorporate with them through long custom, and become a part of the mystery of those callings, and therefore, men dispense with themselves in them as the inseparable sin of their calling, and have no remorse for them: not to insist on these and such like, consider, how frequently this *meum et teum, mine and thine,* proves the apple of strife between the nearest friends, and divides their affections, and begets debates among them; parents and children, and brethren, &c. And certainly, there is always some unjust desire on one side in those contentions, and sometimes, on both sides. How few are there who have hearts so weaned from the world, as in all things to prefer the smallest point of equity, to the greatest temptation of gain!—who in their affairs and all that concerns them, are universally careful to deal with an even hand and even heart, and to keep close to their golden rule, drawn in nature, but almost lost and smothered in the rubbish and corruption of nature, but drawn anew by our Savior's hand, not only in his gospel, but in the hearts of his real followers. *That which thou wouldst have others do to thee, do thou unto them:*—who, when they have anything to transact, wherein is their brother's interest, as well as their own, do in their thoughts change places with him, set him in their own room, and themselves in his, and deal with them after that manner; who think, What should I be willing to have done to me, were I he? That same will I do to him. Were I in that poor man's condition who begs an alms, would I not rather have some relief, than a churlish, or, at least, an empty answer? Were I he who buys, should I not, and might I not justly and reasonably, will to have it so, that no more be exacted of me than the right and due price? Then, so will I use him. How few are there that walk, I say, by this rule! And yet, all that do not thus, are breakers of this commandment in the sight of God.

How few, who are inviolable observers of equity, and are truly liberal and bountiful answerably to their power!—who will sometimes on purpose bate a dish from their table, or a lace from their garment, not to make their stock greater, but to bestow on the poor: who are truly desirous of the good and prosperity of others, and further it all they can!

It is to be like God; this is the particular

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Matt. v. 45, wherein likeness to our heavenly Father is pressed. And this is meant by *Homo homini Deus*. Certainly, were we acquainted with it, it is more true delight to be, not only just, but liberal, than to possess much. It is not to possess, but to be possessed by it, to have heaps, and no heart nor power to use them. He who is thus, doth not only defraud others, but himself; steals from his own necessities, to sacrifice to his god, his chest or bag. *Quicquid omnibus abstulit, sibi negat.* When a man hath such a sum, and though he hath use for it, dares not break it, what is it better than if it were still underground in the mine? It is no more at his service; yea, so much the worse that he is racked between plenty and want, between having and not having it.

But the covetous and the prodigal sin against this commandment: the covetous, by unjust ways of gaining, and the unjust keeping of what he hath gained, keeping it up both from others and himself: and the prodigal, by profuseness, making foolish wants to himself, which drives him upon unjust ways of supply, *Turpiter amittens quod turpius reparet*, as Seneca speaks. Thus, he who is prodigal, must be covetous too, and though men think not so, these two vices which seem so opposite, not only may, but do often dwell together, and covetousness is prodigality's purveyor, being fire for it to feed it; for otherwise it could not subsist, but would starve within a while. Here, then, both avarice and prodigality are condemned: only true equity, and frugal and wise liberality, are obedience to it.

The main causes of all unjust and illiberal dealing, are these two: 1. Diffidence or distrust of the Divine providence and goodness. And 2. That Πλεονεξια, that same *amor sceleratus habendi*, the fond desire of having much.

1. When a man doth not fully trust God with providing for him, and blessing him in just and lawful ways, but apprehends want unless he take some more liberty and elbow-room, this makes him step now and then out of the way, to catch at undue gain by fraud and overreaching, or some such way. But this is a most foolish course. This is to break loose out of God's fatherly hand, and so to forego all that we can look for from him, and to take ways of our own; to choose rather to go a shifting for ourselves in the crooked and accursed ways of unrighteousness, than to be at his providing. Labor, therefore, for a fixed belief of his wisdom, and goodness, and all-sufficiency; and then the greatest straits and wants will not drive you to any indirect ways, wherein you run from him, but will still draw you nearer to himself, and there you will stay and wait upon his hand till he supply you.

2. Desire of having much, or covetousness, whether it be to hoard up or lavish out. But this is a madness. This desire of having much, is never cured by having much: it is Βουλιμια, *canina fames*,—an insatiable *dog-hunger*.

That known determination of the moralist was most true, that "To be truly rich, is not to have much, but to desire little." Labor, then, not to desire much; or rather, desire much, desire to have the Lord for your portion. *Non est illud desiderium,* πλεονεξια, *sed* πανεξια. *That desire is not a grasping at much, but at all.* And if you indeed desire him, you shall have him; and if you have him, you can not but be satisfied, for he is all. To him, therefore, be all praise, honor, and glory, for ever. Amen.

## PRECEPT IX.

**Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor**

The Apostle St. James, in that sharp but most true censure of the tongue, might well call it *an unruly evil*. There are but ten precepts or words of the law of God, and you see, two of them, so far as concerns the outward organ and vent of the sins there forbidden, are bestowed on it, tending, if not only, yet mainly, to keep it in order; one in the first table, and this other in the second; as being ready to fly out both against God and man, if not thus bridled.

The end of this commandment is, to guard the good name of men from injury, as the former doth his goods; this possession being no less, yea, much more precious than the other: and because the great robber and murderer of a good name is the mischievous, detracting tongue, acted by a malignant heart, it requires in the heart a charitable tenderness of the good name of our brethren; and that will certainly prove truth and charitable speech in the tongue.

Though divines here usually speak of lying, in the general notion and extent of it, and not amiss, being most of all exercised in the kind here mentioned: yet, there be such lies as may be more fitly reputed a breach of some other commandment. And possibly the sin of lying in general, as it is a lie, a discrepancy of the speech from the mind, and so a subverting of the Divine ordinance set in nature, making that which he hath made the interpreter of the mind, to be the disguiser of the heart, and withal disregarding God as the searcher of the heart, and sovereign witness of truth, and avenger of falsehood; I say, thus, it may possibly be more proper to refer it to another commandment, particularly to the third. But it imports not much to be very punctual in this. It is seldom or never that one commandment is broken alone. Most sins are complicate disobedience, and in some sins, the breach of many at once is very apparent. As to instance, in perjury, if it be to testify a falsehood against our brethren, both the third commandment and this ninth are violated at once; and if it be in such a thing as

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toucheth his life, the sixth likewise suffers with them.

This perjury, or false testimony in a public judiciary way, is, we see, by the express words and letter of the command, forbidden, as the highest and most heinous wrong of this kind. *Ut testis falsi aut testimonium falsi non dices aut respondebis.* But, under the name of this (as it is in the other commandments), all the other kinds and degrees of offence against our neighbor's good name are comprised.

1. All private ways of calumny and false imputation.

2. All ungrounded and false surmises or suspicions; all uncharitable construction of others' actions and carriage.

3. Strict remarking of the faults of others, without any calling so to do, or honest intention of their good; which appears, if, having observed anything that of truth is reproveable, we seek not to reclaim them by secret and friendly admonition, but passing by themselves, divulge it abroad to others. Ephes. iv. 15. We must not only *speak the truth*, but, *in love*. For this is a most foolish self-deceit, to think that, because it is not forged, but true, that thou speakest, this keeps thee free of the commandment: no, thy false intention and malice make it calumny and falsehood in thee, although, for the matter of it, what thou sayest be most true. All thou gainest by it, is, that thou dost tumble and bemire thyself in the sin of another, and maketh it possibly more thine than it is his own who committed it; for he, it may be, hath some touch of remorse for it, whereas it is evident thou delightest in it; and though thou preface it with a whining, feigned regret and semblance of pitying him, and add withal some word of commending him in somewhat else, this is but the gilding and sugaring the pill to make men swallow it the more easily, and thy bitter malice pass unperceived. They who by their calling ought to watch over the lives of others, must do it faithfully and diligently, admonishing and rebuking privately; and where that prevails not, they may, yea, they ought to do it more publicly; but all in love, seeking nothing but the glory of God, and the salvation of souls.

4. Easy hearing and entertaining of misreports and detractions when others speak them. Exod. xxiii. 1. This is that which maintains and gives subsistence to calumny; otherwise it would starve and die of itself, if nobody took it in and gave it lodging. When malice pours it out, if our ears be shut against it, and there be no vessel to receive it, it would fall like water upon the ground, and could no more be gathered up. But there is that same busy humor that men have—it is very busy, and yet the most have of it more or less—a kind of delight, and contentment to hear evil of others, unless it be of such as they affect, to hear others slighted and disesteemed, that they readily drink in, not without some pleasure, whatsoever is spoken of this kind. *The ear trieth the words*, as Job says, as *the mouth tasteth meats;* but certainly the most ears are perverse and distempered in their taste, as some kinds of palates are; they can find sweetness in sour calumny. But, because men understand one another's diet in this, that the most are so, this is the very thing that keeps up the trade, makes backbiting and detractions abound so in the world, and verifies that known observation in the most, that "*The slanderer wounds three at once*"—himself, him he speaks of, and him that hears. For this third, truly it is in his option to be none of the number: if he will, he may shift his part of the blow, by not believing the slander; yea, may beat it back again with ease upon the slanderer himself by a check or frown, and add that stroke of a repulse to the wound of guiltiness he gives himself.

5. They offend, who seek in any kind, at the expense of the good name and esteem of others, to increase their own; *ex alieni nominis jactura gradum sibi faciunt ad gloriam** —out of others' ruins to make up themselves; and who therefore pull down as much as they can, and are glad to have others to help them to detract from the repute of their brethren, particularly any who are in likelihood to surpass and obscure them; and for this reason incline always rather to hear and speak of the imperfections and dispraise of others, than to their advantage; and would willingly, *Ottoman*-like, kill the good name of their brethren, that theirs may reign alone.† This is a vile disease, and such as can not be incident to any mind that is truly virtuous and gracious. No, such need not this base, dishonest way to raise themselves, but are glad to see virtue, and whatsoever is praiseworthy, to flourish in whomsoever. These are lovers of God indeed, and of his glory, and not their own; and therefore, as all he bestows on themselves, they render back the honor of it to him, so they are glad to see many enriched with his best gifts. For seeing all good that all have, belongs to God, as the sovereign owner and dispenser, this contents and rejoices his children when they see many partake of his bounty, for the more is his glory; and as in love to their brethren, they are always willing to take notice of what is commendable in them, and to commend it, so, they do this the more willingly, because they know that all praise of goodness at last terminates and ends in God. As Solomon says of the rivers, *Unto the place whence they come, thither they return.*

6. They sin against this commandment, who, although they no way wrong their neighbors' good name, yet are not careful to do their

* Sallust.

† The Rabbins frequently condemn this.—HAMMITH CABBED, &c. *Qui honorat se ex ignominia socii sui, non habet partem in seculo venturo.* BERES. RAB. *Item, qui per contemptum aliorum laudem suam quærit, miserrimus est omnium hominum. Quis est honore dignus! Qui honorat alios homines.*—ABOTH., c. 4.

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utmost to right it when it suffers, to remove aspersions from them, and to clear them all that may be. For this is here required, to desire and delight in, and further the good name of others, even as our own; to look most willingly on the fairest side of their actions, and take them in the best sense, and be as inventive of favorable constructions (yet without favoring vice), as malice is witty to misinterpret to the worst; to observe the commendable virtues of our brethren, and pass by their failings; as many, like scurvy flies, skip over what is sound in men, and love to sit upon their sores.

It is lamentable to consider how much this evil of mutual detraction and supplanting the good name one of another, is rooted in man's corrupt nature, and how it spreads and grows in their conversation: as the Apostle St. Paul cites it out of the psalmist, as the description of our nature, *Their throat is an open sepulchre; they have deceitful tongues, and the poison of asps is under their lips.* Rom. iii. 13. Their throat an open sepulchre, full of the bones, as it were, of others' good names that they have devoured; and, among other their endowments, they are *whisperers, backbiters, despiteful,* Rom. i. 30. But it is strange that Christians should retain so much of these evils, who profess themselves renewed, and sanctified, and guided by the Spirit of God. Consider, in your visits and discourses, if something of this kind doth not entertain you often, and lavish away that time you might spend in mutual edification, abusing it to descant upon the actions and life of others, in such a way as neither concerns nor profits us; taking an impertinent, foolish delight in iuquiring and knowing how this party lives, and the other.* This is a very common disease, as Nazianzen observes.† And thus men are most strangers at home: have not leisure to study, and know, and censure themselves, they are so busied about others. It may be there is not always a height of malice in their discourses, but yet, by much babbling to no purpose, they slide into idle detraction and censure of others, beside their intention; for, *in multitude of words there wants not sin.* Prov. x. 9.

And the greatest part are so accustomed to this way, that, if they be put out of it, they must sit dumb and say nothing. There is, I confess, a prudent observation of the actions of others, a reading of men, as they call it, and it may be, by a Christian, done with Christian prudence and benefit: and there may be, too, a useful way of men's imparting their observation of this kind, one to another, concerning the good and evil, the abilities more or less, that they remark in the world: but truly, it is hard to find such as can do this aright, and know they agree in their purpose with honest, harmless minds, intending evil to none, but good to themselves, and admitting of nothing but what suits with this. Among a throng of acquaintance, a man shall, it may be, find very few by whose conversation he may be really bettered, and who return him some benefit for the expense of his time in their society. Howsoever, beware of such as delight in vanity and lying and defaming of others, and withdraw yourselves from them, and set a watch before your own lips. Learn to know the fit season of silence and speech; for that is a very great point of wisdom, and will help very much to the observing of this precept, to give your tongue to be governed by wisdom and piety. Let it not be as a thorny bush, pricking and hurting those who are about you, nor altogether a barren tree, yielding nothing; but a fruitful tree, a *tree of life to your neighbor,* as Solomon calls the tongue of the righteous. Prov. xv. 4.

And let your hearts be possessed of those two excellent graces, humility and charity. Then will your tongue not be in danger of hurting your neighbor; for it is pride and self-love, makes men delight in that. Those are the idols to which men make sacrifice of the good name and reputation of others. The humble man delights in self-disesteem, and is glad to see his brethren's name flourish; it is pleasing music to him to hear the virtues of others acknowledged and commended, and a harsh discord to his lowly thoughts to hear any thing of his own. And the other, charity *thinks no evil,* is so far from casting false aspersions on any, that it rather casts a veil upon true failings and blemishes: *Love covers a multitude of sins.* It is like God's love that begets it, which covers all the sins of his own children.

## PRECEPT X.

**Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.**

It is a known truth, that there is no sound cure of diseases without a removal of their inward cause. Therefore, this second table of the law, containing the rule of equity for the redress of unrighteousness in men's dealing one with another, doth, in this last precept of it, strike at the very root of that unrighteousness, the corrupt desires and evil concupiscence of the heart; *Thou shalt not covet.*

The Romish division of this into two, is so grossly absurd, and so contrary both to the voice of antiquity and reason, that it needs not stay us much to show it such. The thing forbidden is one, *Thou shalt not covet;* and if the several things not to be coveted, divide it, it will be five or six as well as two. Though it be Peter's pretended sword make the divis-

* *Curiosum genus ad cognoscendam vitam alienam, desidiosum ad corrigendam suam.*—Augustine. Conf. l. 10, cap. 3.

† Οὐδὲν οὕτως ἦν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ὡς τὸ λαλεῖν τὰ ἀλλότρια.—Nazianzen. Orat. 1.

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ion, yet certainly, it is not Paul's ὀρθοτομεῖν, not a dividing of the word aright, but a cutting it, as it were, beside the joint. The truth is, they would never have mistook so far as to have offered at this division, were they not driven upon it by an evil necessity of their own making: because they have quite cut out the second, they are forced, for making up the number, to cut this in two. This is but to salve a first wrong with a second; it is *vitium primæ concoctionis quod non corrigitur in secunda*, as they speak: having smothered one commandment, they would have this divided, as the harlot the living child.

The subject of this commandment, that which it forbids, is not, I confess, original sin in its nature and whole latitude; no, nor all kinds of sinful motions immediately arising from it; but such as concern human things, belonging to this second table as their rule: as is clear in all the particulars named in the commandment, and the general word which closes it, including the rest and all other things of that kind. *Nor anything that is thy neighbor's.* For is it needful (with others) for the distinguishing of this precept from the rest, to call this concupiscence here forbidden, only the first risings of it in the heart without consent, whereas the other commandments forbid the consent of the will. I conceive there is no danger to say, that both are forbidden, both in this and in the rest, but in this more expressly.

For what great necessity is there of such subtile distinguishing? may not this be sufficient, that what is included in the other commandments duly understood, it pleased the Divine wisdom to deliver in this last more expressly, that none might pretend ignorance; and so to provide for the more exact observance of justice and equity among men in their actions, by a particular law given to the heart, the fountain of them, regulating it in its dispositions and motions, even the very first stirrings of it, which do most discover its disposition?

And that this is no tautology, nor a superfluous labor, unsuiting the exquisite brevity of this law, we shall easily confess, if we consider that natural hypocrisy and self-indulgence that is in men, which makes them still less regard the temper and actings of their hearts, than their outward carriage, notwithstanding this express commandment concerning it. How much more would they have thought their thoughts, as least such as proceed not to full consent, exempted from the law, if there had been nothing spoken of them, but they only included in the other precepts! We know how the Doctors of Rome extenuate the matter, and how favorable their opinion is in this point, notwithstanding this clear voice of the law of God condemning all concupiscence. The apostle St. Paul confesses ingenuously his own short-sightedness, though a Pharisee instructed in the law, that unless the law had said, *Thou shalt not lust*, he had not found it out in the other commandments, nor known the sinfulness of it. Rom. vii. 7.

This all-wise Lawgiver knew both the blindness of man's mind, and the hypocrisy and deceitfulness of his heart, and therefore, takes away all pretext, and turns him out of all excuse, giving this last commandment expressly concerning the heart, and so teaching him the exact and spiritual nature of all the rest.

This commandment pursues the iniquity of man into its beginning and source. Our Savior calls the evil heart, *an evil treasure*; it is an inexhaustible treasure of evil, yea, it diminisheth not at all, but increaseth rather by spending; the acting of sin confirming and augmenting the corrupt habit of it in the heart. Out of this *evil treasure* issue forth those pollutions that *defile the whole man—evil thoughts, murders, adulteries*, &c. Matthew xv. 19.

It is not proper here to speak at large of the first motions of sin in general, and of the way to distinguish (if any such can be given as certain) the injections of Satan, evil thoughts darted in by him, and such as spring immediately from that corruption which lodgeth within our own breasts; and other things that concern the subject: only, this we ought to observe as pertinent and useful, that if we did consider the purity of the law of God and the impurity of our own hearts, the continual risings of sinful concupiscences within us, that stain us and all our actions, this would lay us a great deal lower in our own opinion than usually we are. *The law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin*, says the apostle. Rom. vii. 14.

Men think it is well with them, and they please themselves to think so, and glory in it, that their whole life has been outwardly unblameable, and, possibly, free from the secret commission of gross sins. But would they, who are thus most spotless, look a little deeper inward upon the incessant workings of vain, sinful thoughts, which at least touch upon the affection, and stir it somewhat; and consider their hearts naturally like boiling pots, still sending up of this scum of evil concupiscence, and, as a fountain casteth forth her water, as Jeremiah speaks, this bitter poison-spring still streaming forth, and even in the best, not fully dried up:* certainly the due sight of these would abate much of those gay thoughts which any can have of themselves, and, from the best and most sensible, would draw out the apostle's word, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?* There is nothing that doth more certainly both humble and grieve the godly man, than the sense of this; and because till then, it will not cease

* *Tres sunt transgressiones, à quibus homo nullo die, inquiunt Talmudici, nunquam in hac vita liberabitur cogitationes peccati; attentio orationis* (i. e. *quod nunquam satis attentè per omnem attentionem orare possit*); *et lingua mala.* [Bava. Bosca. f. 1342.] There are three transgressions, say the Talmudists, from which a man can no day ever in this life be free: the thoughts of sin, wanderings in prayer, and an evil tongue.



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to vex him, nothing makes him more long for the day of his full deliverance, and makes him cry, *Usquequo, Domine, usquequo? O, how long, O Lord, how long?*

We are taught by this commandment, that great point of spiritual prudence, to observe the beginnings and conception of sin within us, and to crush it then when it is weakest, before it pass on in its usual gradation, as the Apostle St. James makes it, James i. 14, 15. If it *draw us away* but to hear it, it will *entice* us, take us with delight; and then it will, by that, work us to consent, and *having so conceived*, it will *bring forth sin*, and *sin finished* will *bring forth death*.

Again, because, as we see, the very concupiscence itself, though it proceed no further, pollutes and leaves a stain behind it; this calls for our diligence, to seek that renovation and habitual purity of heart infused from above, and the daily increase of it, being begun, that may free us more and more from that depraved concupiscence and the defilements of it. Think it not enough to cleanse the tongue and the hands, but above all, endeavor for cleaness of heart, and that will keep all the rest clean. See Jam. iv. 8. Jeremiah iv. 14.

The concupiscence particularly here forbidden, we see, is an inordinate desire, or the least beginning of such a desire, of those outward things which belong not to us, *Thy neighbor's house*, &c. For all breach of the other commandments of this second table, have their rise and beginning from such a desire; therefore, this is set last, as the hedge to guard all the rest from violation. For certainly, he that flees the least motion of a wrongful thought, will never proceed to any injurious word or action. So then, this commandment is broken by the least envious look upon any good of others, or the least bendings of mind after it for ourselves; and by that common mischief of self-love, as the very thing which gives life to all such undue desires; and by that common folly of discontent at our own estate, which begets a wishing for that of others; and this, though it be not joined with an express desire of their loss or hurt, yet, because it is the seed and principle of injustice, therefore it is sinful, and here forbidden.

And, on the contrary, much of the observance of this precept lies in that αὐτάρκεια, that contentedness and satisfaction of mind with our own estate, which will surely keep us free from this disordered coveting. Therefore, chiefly labor to have that wise and sweet contentation dwelling within you, and banish all contrary thoughts, by these and other such like considerations:—

1. If you do indeed believe that it is the sovereign hand of God that *divides to the nations their inheritance*, as Moses speaks, Deut. xxxii. 8, and so, likewise, to particular men, that he carves to every one their condition and place in the world, you can not but think he hath done it more wisely than men could do for themselves. They could never agree upon it: every man would think it best for himself to be in the best and highest condition; and that is not possible. But it is best for the making up of the universe, that there be those differences God hath made, and, from the highest to the lowest, he hath set each one in that station he thought good. There is not a common soldier in an army, but would wish to be a commander, and so, if each might have his will, all would command, and none obey. The like holds in masters and servants, and in all such other differences. So then, seeing those differences are in the world, and seeing it wholly belongs to him who rules the world to dispose of them, our part is no other than contentedly to accept of his disposal, and to serve him in the station where he hath set us.

2. If you be such as have evidence you are the children of God, then you know, he doth not only allot your condition wisely, but withal, in peculiar love and favor. He perfectly knows what outward estate is particularly fittest for you, and will conduce most to your highest good, and will not miss to give you that, and no other. And certainly it is true in matter of estate, as of our garments, not that which is largest, but that which fits us best, is best for us.

3. Consider, that no outward condition hath contentment in it of itself: this must arise from somewhat within. Men see the great attendance, and train of servants that wait upon princes and other great persons, but they see not the train of cares and perplexing thoughts that many times go along too, and are more inseparable attendants than any of the rest: they see their fine clothes and stately buildings, but they see not the secret malcontents and vexations that dwell with them, and are the very linings of the rich apparel. Light things often discontent them. Look at their very pastimes and recreations; they are sometimes as much troubled with disappointment in those, as the poor man is wearied with his labor. It was not a much greater cross that vexed Haman: all his advancement availed not without Mordecai's courtesy. A strange disease, that he felt more the pain of another man's stiff knee, than the contentment of all his honors! But whoso knew their deeper vexations, would admire them less, when crossed in their ambition or friends, or the husband and wife not finding that harmony of dispositions and affections. Few, or none, but have something that a man would willingly leave out, if he were for his wish to be in their condition. The shorter and surer way, then, to contentment, is to be contentedly what he is.

4. Consider those who are below you, and in a far meaner condition, and by that argue yourself, not only to contentment, but to thankfulness. We pervert all: when we look below us, it raises our pride; and when

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above us, it casts us into discontent. Might we not as well, contrariwise, draw humility out of the one, and contentment out of the other?

5. Seek to be assured that God is yours. Then, whatsoever others possess, you will be sure not to covet it, nor envy them. Those who have most, you will pity, if they want him; and those who have him, you will have no envy at them for sharing with you, but love them the more. For that Infinite Good is enough for all that choose him: and none do so, but those whom he hath first chosen in eternal love.

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# A SHORT CATECHISM.

*Question.* WHAT is naturally every man's chief desire?

*Answer.* To be happy.

*Q.* Which is the way to true happiness?

*A.* True religion.

*Q.* What is true religion?

*A.* The true and lively knowledge of the Only true God, and of him whom he hath sent, Jesus Christ.

*Q.* Whence is this knowledge to be learned?

*A.* All the works of God declare his being, and his glory; but the clearer knowledge of himself, and his Son Jesus Christ, is to be learned from his own word, contained in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

*Q.* What do those scriptures teach us concerning God?

*A.* That he is one infinite, eternal Spirit, most wise, and holy, and just and merciful, and the all-powerful Maker, and Ruler of the world.

*Q.* What do they further teach us concerning him?

*A.* That he is Three in One, and One in Three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

*Q.* What will that lively knowledge of God effectually work in us?

*A.* It will cause us to believe in him, and to love him above all things, even above ourselves, to adore and worship him, to pray to him, and to praise him, and exalt him with all our might, and to yield up ourselves to the obedience of all his commandments, as having both made us, and made himself known to us for that very end.

Rehearse, then, the articles of our belief.

I believe in God the Father, &c.

Rehearse the Ten Commandments of the Law, which are the rules of our obedience, and so, the trial of our love.

*A.* God spake these words, I am the Lord thy God, &c.

*Q.* What is the summary our Savior hath given us of this Law?

*A.* Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself.

*Q.* What is the effectual means of obtaining increase of faith and power to obey, and generally, all graces and blessings at the hand of God?

*A.* Prayer.

Rehearse that most excellent and perfect prayer that our Savior hath taught us.

*A.* Our Father, which art in heaven, &c.

*Q.* In what estate was man created?

*A.* After the image of God in holiness and righteousness.

*Q.* Did he continue in that estate?

*A.* No. But by breaking the commandment which his Maker gave him, eating of the fruit of that tree which was forbidden him, he made himself and his whole posterity subject to sin and death.

*Q.* Hath God left man in this misery, without all means and hopes of recovery?

*A.* No. For he so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

*Q.* What is then the great doctrine of the gospel?

*A.* That same coming of the Son of God in the flesh, and giving himself to the death of the cross, to take away the sin of the world, and his rising again from the dead, and ascending into glory.

*Q.* What doth that gospel mainly teach and really persuade all the followers of it to do?

*A.* It teacheth them to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world.

*Q.* How hath our Lord Jesus himself expressed the great and necessary duty of all his disciples?

*A.* That they deny themselves, and take up their cross, and follow him.

Rehearse then some of the chief points wherein we are to follow our Lord Jesus Christ.

*A.* 1. To surrender ourselves wholly to our heavenly Father, and his good pleasure in all things, even in the sharpest afflictions and sufferings: and not at all to do our own will, or design our own praise or advantage, but

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n all things to dc his will and intend his glory.

2. To be spotless, and chaste, and holy, in our whole conversation.

Add a third.

3. To be meek and lowly, not to slander or reproach, to mock or despise any; and if any do so to us, to bear it patiently, yea to rejoice in it.

A fourth.

4. Unfeignedly to love our Christian brethren, and to be charitably and kindly affected toward all men, even to our enemies, forgiving them, yea, praying for them, and returning them good for evil; to comfort the afflicted, and relieve the poor, and to do good for all, as we are able.

*Q.* Is it necessary that all Christians live according to these rules?

*A.* So absolutely necessary, that they who do not so in some good measure, whatsoever they profess, do not really believe in Jesus Christ, nor have any portion in him.

*Q.* What visible seals hath our Savior annexed to that gospel, to confirm our faith, and to convey the grace of it to us?

*A.* The two Sacraments of the New Testament, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper.

*Q.* What doth Baptism signify and seal?

*A.* Our washing from sin, and our new birth in Jesus Christ.

*Q.* What doth the Lord's Supper signify and seal?

*A.* Our spiritual nourishment and growth in him, and transforming us more and more into his likeness, by commemorating his death, and feeding on his body and blood, under the figures of bread and wine.

*Q.* What is required to make fit and worthy communicants of the Lord's Supper?

*A.* Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and repentance toward God, and charity toward all men.

*Q.* What is faith in our Lord Jesus?

*A.* It is the grace by which we both believe his whole doctrine, and trust in him as the Redeemer and Savior of the world, and entirely deliver up ourselves to him, to be taught and saved and ruled by him, as our Prophet, Priest, and King.

*Q.* What is repentance?

*A.* It is a godly sorrow for sin, and a hearty and real turning from all sin unto God.

*Q.* What is the final portion of unbelieving and unrepentant sinners?

*A.* The everlasting torments of devils.

*Q.* What is the final portion of them who truly repent and believe and obey the gospel?

*A.* The blessed life of angels, in the vision of God for ever.

*A Question for young Persons, before their first admission to the Lord's Supper.*

*Q.* Whereas you were, in your infancy, baptized into the name of Jesus Christ, do you now, upon distinct knowledge, and with a firm belief and pious affection, own that Christian faith of which you have given an account, and withal, your baptismal vow of renouncing the service of Satan, and the world, and the lusts of the flesh, and of devoting yourself to God in all holiness of life?

*A.* I do sincerely and heartily declare my belief of that faith and own my engagement to that holy vow, and resolve, by the assistance of God's grace, to continue in the careful observance of it all my days.

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# THEOLOGICAL LECTURES.

## PREFACE

BY

THE PUBLISHER OF THE LATIN EDITION.

To the Reader,

"What is grand and substantial," says Quinctilian, "pleases long; while that which is only neat and handsome, charms for a while, but soon cloys."* Now, what can be imagined more grand and substantial, than to contemplate the great Creator of the universe, in his visible works; to view, in this vast volume, which lies always open, his infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, and admire the instances thereof, that appear always new and astonishing? Again, what can be more agreeable and sublime, than turning our eyes to the great mysteries of revealed religion, to read with wonder and delight what is contained in the sacred Scriptures, concerning the Savior and Redeemer of the human race from the dreadful gulf of death and misery into which they had fallen; to review with attention what is therein discovered, with regard to our highest happiness, the rewards of virtue, and the punishment of an impious life; and to have these important matters deeply impressed upon the heart? These truths, however great and interesting, are laid before thee, pious and Christian reader, in these theological dissertations; where thou wilt find them deduced with great learning, explained with clearness and accuracy, and confirmed by powerful arguments. For our author, now in heaven,† who, while he lived, was equally remarkable for learning and piety, never used to stray beyond the verge of this divine system.

That these remains of his were the sacred lectures he read in the public hall of the university of Edinburgh, while he was principal of that university, will admit of no manner of doubt: there are a great many still alive, who can attest this truth; as they were themselves present at these lectures, to their great satisfaction and improvement. They all heard them, some took notes of them; and it is to be hoped, some had the substance of them powerfully impressed upon their hearts. To these I appeal, and to them, I doubt not, this work will be very acceptable; since those instructions which gave so much pleasure when heard but once, and that in a cursory manner, they may now have recourse to as often as they please; they may read them at their leisure, and draw from them matter of most delightful meditation. And, to be sure, those who have the least divine disposition of mind, will make it the principal business of their life, and their highest pleasure to stray through those delightful gardens abounding with such sweet and fragrant flowers, and refresh their hearts with the celestial honey that may be drawn from them: nor is there any ground to fear that such supplies will fail; for how often soever you have recourse to them, you will always find them blooming, full of juice, and swelled with the dew of heaven: nay, when by deep and continued meditation, you imagine you have pulled the finest flower, it buds forth again, and what Virgil writes concerning his fabulous golden bough is, in strictest truth, applicable in this case:—

*——Uno avulso, non deficit alter,*
*Aureus.*

The lectures I now present thee with, I caused to be copied out fair from a manuscript in the author's own handwriting; which was a work that required great care and attention, on account of the blots and interlineations of that original manuscript; for the author had written them in haste, and without the least thought of ever publishing them. This done, at the desire of a great many, I got them printed, and now lay them before the public, in the same order in which they were read, as far as can be recollected from circumstances.

You must not expect to find in these truly sacred lectures, the method commonly used in theological systems; for while our reverend author clearly explains the doctrines of religion, he intermixes to excellent purpose the principles of piety, and while he enlightens the understanding, he at the same same time warms the heart.

Being to treat of religion, he uses a practical method, which is most suitable to his subject, and begins with *happiness*, that being the scope and design of religion, as well as the ultimate end of human life. He begins with an explanation of happiness in general, on which he treats at some length; then proceeds to consider the happiness of man, which may be called perfect and truly divine, as it has for its object the infinitely blessed and perfect Being who created him, and for-

* Quæ solida et ampla sunt din placent; quæ autem lepida et concinna, paululum quidem mulcent, sed citò satiant. *Fab. Quint.*

† Ὁ μακαρίτης.

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mally consists in the beatific vision and fruition of Him, which is reserved in heaven for those who by faith are travelling through this earth, toward that blessed country. He adds, with great propriety, that happiness, so far as it is compatible with this wretched life of sorrows, consists in true religion, and in religion alone; not only as it is the way which leads directly to that perfect happiness reserved in heaven; but because it is itself of Divine original, and, in reality, the beginning of that very happiness which is to be perfected in the life to come.

He observes, that the doctrine of religion is most justly called theology, as it has the most high God for its author, object, and end. He suggests many excellent thoughts concerning the Divine existence, and reasons from the common consent of nations, from the creatures we see about us, and from what we feel and experience within ourselves, as all these so loudly proclaim the being of God: but the argument taken from the harmony and beautiful order of the universe, he prosecutes at great length; and from this consideration, which is attended with greater evidence than all the demonstrations of the sciences, he clearly proves the existence of an eternal, independent Being.

With regard to the nature of God, he advances but little, and with great caution; for concerning the Supreme Being he thought it dangerous even to speak truth; but is very earnest and diffuse in his exhortations to make the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, that shine forth with great lustre in all his works, the subject of our constant and most serious meditation. As to the unfathomable depth of his eternal decrees, he was greatly pleased with that expression of Augustin, "Let others dispute, I will admire."*

Among his works, the first is that vast and stupendous one, the primitive creation of all things, which, besides the infallible testimony of the inspired oracles, our author, by a concise, but clear dissertation on the subject, proves quite consonant and agreeable to reason. He then treats of man, of his original integrity, and the most unhappy fall that soon followed. But to this most lamentable story he subjoins another as happy and encouraging as the other is moving, I mean, the admirable scheme of Divine love for the salvation of sinners. A glorious and blessed method, that to the account of the most shocking misery subjoins the doctrine of incomparable mercy! Man, forsaking God, falls into the miserable condition of devils; God, from whom he revolted, determines to extricate him, by his powerful hand, out of this misery; and that this might be the more wonderfully effected, God himself becomes man. "This is the glory of man, by such means raised from his woful state! this the wonder of angels, and this the sum and substance of all miracles united in one!"* The word was made flesh! He who died as man, as God rose again, and having been seen on earth, returns to heaven, whence he came. On each of these he advances a few thoughts that are weighty and serious, but, at the same time pleasing and agreeable.

To these lectures, I have added some exhortations by our author, to the candidate for the degree of master of arts, delivered a the annual solemnity held in the university for that purpose; together with his meditations on Psalms the 4th, 32d, and 130th;† because I was unwilling that any of the works of so great a man should continue in obscurity, to be devoured by moths and bookworms, especially one calculated for forming the morals of mankind, and for the direction of life. For in these meditations, he exhorts and excites the youth under his care, not by labored oratory and pompous expressions, but by powerful eloquence, earnest entreaties, and solid arguments, to the love of Christ, purity of life, and contempt of the world.

But what will all this signify to thee, reader, if thy mind is carried away with childish folly, or the wild rage of passions, or even if thou art still laboring under a stupid negligence of the means of grace, and unconcerned about eternal happiness and thy immortal soul? I doubt not, however, but these truly divine essays will fall into the hands of some, who are endued with a better disposition of mind; nor are we to despair of the rest, "for the Father of spirits liveth still, and he hath his seat in heaven, who instructs the hearts of men on this earth."‡ May, therefore, the greatest and best of Beings grant, that these academical exercises may have happy effects! And that our heavenly Father would second these means with his all-powerful grace, shall be, while he lives, the humble and ardent prayer of him,

Who earnestly desire thy salvation,

JA. FAIL.

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## LECTURE I.

### INTRODUCTION.

WITH little strength I undertake a great work, or rather, with the least abilities I venture upon a task which is of all others the greatest and most important. Among the various undertakings of men, can an instance be given, of one more sublime than an intention to form the human mind anew, after the Divine image? Yet it will, I doubt not, be universally acknowledged, that this is the

* Alii disputent, ego mirabor.

* Hic hominis ex tanto dedecore resurgentis honos, hic angelorum stupor, hoc miraculorum omnium compendium!

† These were likewise written in Latin, and have been translated.

‡ Vivit enim spirituum pater, et cathedram habet in cœlo, qui corda docet in terris.

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true end and design, not only of ministers in their several congregations, but also of professors of divinity in schools. And though, in most respects, the ministerial office is evidently superior to that of professors of theology in colleges, in one respect the other seems to have the preference, as it is, at least for the most part, the business of the former to instruct the common sort of men, the ignorant and illiterate; while it is the work of the latter to season with heavenly doctrine the minds of select societies of youth, who have had a learned education, and are devoted to a studious life; many of whom, it is to be hoped, will, by the Divine blessing, become preachers of the same salutary doctrine themselves. And surely this ought to be a powerful motive with all those who, by the Divine dispensation, are employed in such a work, to exert themselves with the greater life and spirit in the discharge of their duty; especially when they consider that those Christian instructions and seeds of true piety, which they instil into the tender minds of their pupils, will by them be spread far and wide, and in due time, conveyed, as it were, by so many canals and aqueducts, to many parts of the Lord's vineyard. Plutarch employs an argument of this kind, to prevail with the philosophers to exert themselves in the instruction of princes and great men, rather than with a haughty sullenness to avoid their company; "For thus," says he, "you will find a short way to be useful to many." And to be sure, he that conveys the principles of virtue and wisdom into the minds of the lower classes of men, or the illiterate, whatever progress his disciples may make, employs his time and talents only for the advantage of his pupils; but he that forms the minds of magistrates and great men, or such as are intended for high and exalted stations, by improving one single person, becomes a benefactor to large and numerous societies. Every physician of generous principles, as Plutarch expresses it [Φιλοκαλος], would have an uncommon ambition to cure an eye intended to watch over many persons, and convey the sense of seeing to numbers; and a musical instrument-maker would, with uncommon pleasure, exert his skill in perfecting a harp, if he knew that it was to be employed by the hands of Amphion, and by the force of its music, to draw stones together for building the walls of Thebes. A learned and ingenious author, alluding to this fable, and applying it to our present purpose, calls professors of theology in schools, makers of harps for building the walls of a far more famed and beautiful city, meaning the heavenly Jerusalem, in such a manner, that the stones of this building being truly, and without a fable, living, and charmed by the pleasant harmony of the gospel, come of their own accord to take their places in the wall.

I am not so little acquainted with myself, as to entertain the least hope of success in so great a work by my own strength and abilities; but, while I humbly depend upon the Divine goodness and favor, I have no reason to despair; for in the hand of Omnipotence, all instruments are alike. Nor can it be questioned that He, who made all things out of nothing, can produce any change he pleases in his creatures that are already made; He who gives Ζωην, και πνοην, και παντα, *life and breath, and all things*, can easily strengthen the weak, and give riches in abundance to the poor and needy. Our emptiness only serves to lay us open to, and attract the fulness of Him "who fills all things, and is over all; who gives wisdom to the mind, and prevents its irregular sallies."

Under his auspices, therefore, young gentlemen, we are to aspire to true and saving wisdom, and to try to raise ourselves above this sublunary world. For it is not my intention to perplex you with curious questions, and lead you through the thorny paths of disputation; but, if I had any share of that excellent art, it would be my delight to direct your way, through the easy and pleasant paths of righteousness, to a life of endless felicity, and be myself your companion in that blessed pursuit. I would take pleasure to kindle in your souls the most ardent desires, and fervent love of heavenly things; and to use the expression of a great divine, add "wings to your souls, to snatch them away from this world, and restore them to God." For, if I may be allowed to speak with freedom, most part of the notions that are treated of in theological schools, that are taught with great pomp and ostentation, and disputed with vast bustle and noise, may possibly have the sharpness of thorns; but they have also their barrenness: they may prick and tear, but they can afford no solid nourishment to the minds of men. *No man ever gathered grapes off thorns, nor figs off thistles.* "To what purpose," saith A Kempis, "dost thou reason profoundly concerning the Trinity, if thou art without humility, and thereby displeasest that Trinity?"* And St. Augustine, upon the words of Isaiah, *I am the Lord that teacheth thee to profit*, observes with great propriety, that the prophet here mentions utility in opposition to subtilty.† Such are the principles I would wish to communicate to you; and it is my earnest desire and fervent prayer, that, while I, according to my measure of strength, propose them to your understanding, He who sits in heaven, yet condescends to instruct the hearts of men on this earth, may effectually impress them upon your minds.

But that you may be capable of this supernatural light and heavenly instruction, it is, first of all, absolutely necessary, that your minds be called off from foreign objects; and

* Quorsum alta de Trinitate disputare, si careas humilitate, et sic Trinitate displiceas?

† Utilia non subtilia.

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turned in upon themselves; for, as long as your thoughts are dispersed and scattered in pursuit of vanity and insignificant trifles, he that would lay before them the principles and precepts of this spiritual wisdom, would commit them, like the sybil's prophecies, that were written on loose leaves of trees, to the mercy of the inconstant winds, and thereby render them entirely useless. It is certainly a matter of great difficulty, and requires uncommon art, to fix the thoughts of men, especially young men and boys, and turn them in upon themselves. We read in the parable of the gospel concerning the prodigal son, that, first of all, *he came to himself*, and then returned to his father. It is certainly a very considerable step toward conversion to God, to have the mind fixed upon itself, and disposed to think seriously of its own immediate concerns; which the pious St. Bernard excellently expresses in this prayer: "May I," says he, "return from external objects to my own inward concerns, and from inferior objects rise to those of a superior nature."* I should look upon it as no small happiness, if, out of this whole society, I could gain but one, but wish earnestly I could prevail with many, and still more ardently that I could send you all away, fully determined to entertain more serious and secret thoughts than ever you had before, with regard to your immortal state and eternal concerns. But now vain are the thoughts of men! What a darkness overclouds their minds!† It is the great complaint of God concerning his people, that *they have not a heart to understand.* It is at once the great disgrace and misery of mankind, that they live without forethought. That brutish thoughtlessness, pardon the expression, or, to speak more intelligibly, want of consideration, is the death and ruin of souls. And the ancients observe, with great truth and justice that, "a thoughtful mind is the spring and source of every good thing."‡

It is the advice of the psalmist, that we should *converse much with ourselves:* an advice, indeed, which is regarded by few; for the greatest part of mankind are nowhere greater strangers than at home. But it is my earnest request to you, that you would be intimately acquainted with yourselves, and as becomes persons devoted to a studious life, be much at home, much in your own company, and very often engaged in serious conversation with yourselves. Think gravely, "To what purpose do I live? Whither am I going?" Ask thyself, hast thou any fixed and determined purpose, any end that thou pursuest with steadfastness?‖ "The principles I have embraced under the name of the Christian religion, the things I have so often heard about a future state and life, and death eternal, are they true or false?" If they are true, as we all absolutely profess to believe they are, then, to be sure, the greatest and most important matters of this world are vain and even less than vanity itself: all our knowledge is but ignorance, our riches poverty, our pleasure bitterness, and our honors vile and dishonorable. How little do those men know who are ambitious of glory, what it really is, and how to be attained! Nay, they eagerly catch at the empty shadow of it, while they avoid and turn their backs upon that glory which is real, substantial, and everlasting. The happiness of good men in the life to come, is not only infinitely above all our expressions, but even beyond our most enlarged thoughts. By comparing, however, great things with small, we attain some faint notions of these exalted and invisible blessings, from the earthly and visible enjoyments of this world. In this respect, even the Holy Scriptures descend to the weakness of our capacities, and as the Hebrews express it, "The law of God speaks the language of the children of men."* They speak of this celestial life, under the representations of a heritage, of riches, of a kingdom, and a crown, but with uncommon epithets, and such as are by no means applicable to earthly glory or opulence, however great. It is *an inheritance*, but one that is *uncorrupted, undefiled, and that fadeth not away;* a *kingdom*, but *one that can never be shaken*, much less ruined, which can never be said of the thrones of this sublunary world, as evidently appears from the histories of all nations, and our own recent experience. Here, ye sons of Adam, a covetous and ambitious race, here is room for a laudable avarice; here are motives to excite your ambition, and, at the same time, the means of satisfying it to the full. But it must be acknowledged, that the belief of these things is far from being common. What a rare attainment is faith, seeing that among the prodigious crowds of those who profess to believe in this world, one might justly cry out—"Where is a true believer to be found?" That man shall never persuade me that he believes the truth and certainty of heavenly enjoyments, who cleaves to this earth, nay, who does not scorn and despise it, with all its baits and allurements, and employ all his powers, as well as his utmost industry, to obtain these immense and eternal blessings.

Nor is there anything in the way to these enjoyments that can deter you from it, unless holiness in heart and life appear to be a heavy and troublesome task to you: whereas, on the contrary, nothing surely can be named, that is either more suited to the dignity of human nature, more beautiful and becoming, or attended with greater pleasure. I therefore beseech and entreat you, by the bowels of Divine mercy, and by your own most precious souls, that you would seriously consider these

* Ab exterioribus ad interiora redeam, et ab inferioribus ad superiora ascendam.

† O vanas hominum mentes! O pectora cæca!

‡ Intellectus cogitabundus principium omnis boni.

‖ Est aliquid quo tendis et ir. quid dirigis arcum?

* Lex Dei loquitur linguam filiorum hominum

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things, and make them your principal study. Try an experiment, attended with no danger or expense; make a trial of the ways of this wisdom, and I doubt not but you will be so charmed with the pleasantness thereof, that you will never thenceforward depart from them. For this purpose, I earnestly recommend to you to be constant and assiduous in prayer. Nay, it is St. Paul's exhortation that you *pray without ceasing*. 1 Thess. v. 17. So that prayer may be, not only, according to the old saying, *Clavis diei, et sera noctis*—"The key that opens the day, and the lock that shuts up the night"—but also, so to speak, a staff for support in the daytime, and a bed for rest and comfort in the night; two conveniences which are commonly expressed by one single Hebrew word. And be assured, that the more frequently you pray, with so much the greater ease and pleasure will your prayers be attended, not only from the common and necessary connexion between acts and habits, but also from the nature of this duty. For prayer, being a kind of conversation with God, gradually purifies the soul, and makes it continually more and more like unto him. Our love to God is also very much improved by this frequent intercourse with him; and by his love, on the other hand, the soul is effectually disposed to fervency, as well as frequently in prayer, and can, by no means, subsist without it.

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## LECTURE II.

### HAPPINESS, ITS NAME AND NATURE, AND THE DESIRE OF IT IMPLANTED IN THE HUMAN HEART.

How deep and dark is that abyss of misery into which man is precipitated by his deplorable fall; since he has thereby lost, not only the possession, but also the knowledge of his chief or principal good! He has no distinct notion of what it is, of the means of recovering it, or the way he has to take in pursuit of it. Yet the human mind, however stunned and weakened by so dreadful a fall, still retains some faint idea, some confused and obscure notions of the good it has lost, and some remaining seeds of its heavenly original.* It has also still remaining a kind of languid sense of its misery and indigence, with affections suitable to those obscure notions. From this imperfect sense of its poverty, and these feeble affections, arise some motions and efforts of the mind, like those of one groping in the dark, and seeking rest everywhere, but meeting with it nowhere. This, at least, is beyond all doubt, and indisputable, that all men wish well to themselves, nay, that they all catch at, and desire to attain, the enjoyment of the most absolute and perfect good; even the worst of men have not lost this regard for themselves, nor can they possibly divest themselves of it. And though, alas! it is but too true, that, as we are naturally blind, we run ourselves upon misery, under the disguise of happiness, and not only embrace, according to the common saying, "a cloud instead of Juno,"* but death itself instead of life: yet, even from this most fatal error, it is evident that we naturally pursue either real happiness, or what, to our mistaken judgment, appears to be such. Nor can the mind of man divest itself of this propensity, without divesting itself of its being. This is what the schoolmen mean, when, in their manner of expression, they say, that "The will is carried toward happiness, not simply as will, but as nature."†

It is true, indeed, the generality of mankind are not well acquainted with the motions of their own minds, nor at pains to observe them, but, like brutes, by a kind of secret impulse, are violently carried toward such enjoyments as fall in their way: they do but very little, or not at all, enter into themselves, and review the state and operations of their own minds; yet, in all their actions, all their wishes and desires (though they are not always aware of it themselves), this thirst after immortality exerts and discovers itself. Consider the busy part of mankind hurrying to and fro in the exercise of their several professions—physicians, lawyers, merchants, mechanics, farmers, and even soldiers themselves—they all toil and labor, in order to obtain rest, if success attend their endeavors, and any fortunate event answer their expectations; encouraged by these fond hopes, they eat their bread with the sweat of their brow. But their toil, after all, is endless, constantly returning in a circle; and the days of men pass away in suffering real evils, and entertaining fond hopes of apparent good, which they seldom or never attain. *Every man walks in a vain show: he torments himself in vain.* Psalm xxxix. 6. He pursues rest and ease, like his shadow, and never overtakes them; but, for the most part, ceases to live, before he begins to live to purpose. However, after all this confused and fluctuating appetite, which determines us to the pursuit of good, either real or apparent, as it is congenial with us, and deeply rooted in the human heart, so it is the great handle by which Divine grace lays hold, as it were, upon our nature, draws us to itself, and extricates us out of the profound abyss of misery into which we are fallen.

From this it evidently follows, that the design of sacred theology is the very same with that of human nature, and *he that rejects it hates his own soul* (for so the wise king of Israel emphatically expresses it, Prov. viii. 36); he is the most irreconcilable enemy to his own happiness, and absolutely at variance

* Cognati semina cœli.

* Nubem pro Junone.

† In beatitudinem fertur voluntas, non ut voluntas sed ut natura.



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with himself; according to that of St. Bernard, "After I was set in opposition to Thee, I became also contrary to myself."*

These considerations have determined me to begin these instructions, such as they are, which, with Divine assistance, I intend to give you, concerning the principles of the Christian religion, with a short disquisition concerning the chief or ultimate end of man. And here it is to be, first of all, observed, that the transcendent and supreme end of all, is the *glory of God;* all things returning, in a most beautiful circle, to this, as the original source from which they at first took their rise. But the end of true religion, as far as it regards us, which is immediately connected with the former, and serves, in a most glorious manner, to promote it, is, the salvation and happiness of mankind.

Though I should not tell you what is to be understood by the term *happiness* or *felicity* in general, I can not imagine any of you would be at a loss about it. Yet, I shall give a brief explication of it, that you may have the more distinct ideas of the thing itself, and the juster notions of what is to be further advanced on the subject. Nor is there, indeed, any controversy on this head; for all are agreed that by the terms commonly used in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin,† to express happiness or felicity, we are to understand *that perfect and complete good, which is suited and adapted to intelligent nature.* I say *to intelligent nature*, because the brute creatures can not be said to be happy, but in a very improper sense. Happiness can not be ascribed to horses or oxen, let them be never so well fed, and left in the full possession of liberty and ease. And as good in general is peculiar to intelligent beings; so, more especially, that perfect good, which constitutes felicity in its full and most extensive acceptation. It is true, indeed, in common conversation, men are very prodigal of this term, and, with extravagant levity, misapply it to every common enjoyment of life, or apparent good they meet with, especially such as is most suited to their present exigencies; and thus, as Aristotle, in his Ethics, expresses it, "The sick person considers health, and the poor man riches, as the chief good." It is also true, that learned men, and even the sacred Scriptures, give the name of felicity to some symptoms and small beginnings of future happiness. But, as we have already observed, this term, in its true and complete sense, comprehends in it that absolute and full perfection of good which entirely excludes all uneasiness, and brings with it everything that can contribute to satisfaction and delight. Consequently, that good, whatever it be, that most perfectly supplies all the wants, and satisfies all the cravings of our rational appetites, is *objective felicity*, as the schools express it. and actual, or formal felicity, is the *full possession and enjoyment of that complete and chief good.* It consists of a perfect tranquillity of the mind, and not a dull and stupid indolence, like the calm that reigns in the Dead sea; but such a piece of mind as is lively, active, and constantly attended with the purest joy: not a mere absence of uneasiness and pain; but such a perfect ease as is constantly accompanied with the most perfect satisfaction, and supreme delight; and if the term had not been degraded by the mean uses to which it has been prostituted, I should not scruple to call it pleasure.* And, indeed, we may still call it by this name, provided we purify the term, and guard it by the following limitations; so as to understand by felicity, such a pleasure as is perfect, constant, pure, spiritual, and divine. For never, since I ventured to think upon such subjects, could I be satisfied with the opinion of Aristotle and the schoolmen, who distinguish between the fruition of the chief good, which constitutes true felicity, aud the delight and satisfaction attending that fruition; because, at this rate, that good would not be the ultimate end and completion of our desires, nor desired on its own account: for whatever good we wish to possess, the end of our wishing is, that we may enjoy it with tranquillity and delight; and this uninterrupted delight or satisfaction, which admits of no alloy, is, love in possession of the beloved object, and at the height of its ambition.

* Postquam posuisti me contrarium tibi, factus sum contrarius mihi.

† אשרי in Hebrew, μακαριοτης et ευδαιμονία in Greek, *felicitas et beatitudo* in Latin.

* Ἡ ἐυδαιμονία ἡδονή ἀμεταβλητὸς: Happiness is pleasure perpetuated.

## LECTURE III.

### HAPPINESS OF MAN, AND THAT IT IS REALLY TO BE FOUND.

You will not, I imagine, be offended, nor think I intend to insult you, because I have once and again, with great earnestness and sincerity, wished you and myself a sound and serious temper of mind: for, if we may represent things as they really are, very few men are possessed of so valuable a blessing. The far greater part of them are intoxicated either with the pleasures or the cares of this world; they stagger about with a tottering and unstable pace; and, as Solomon expresses it, *The labor of the foolish wearieth every one of them: because he knoweth not how to go to the city:* Eccles. x. 15:—the heavenly city, and the vision of peace, which very few have a just notion of, or are at pains to seek after. Nay, they know not what it is they are seeking. They flutter from one object to another, and live at hazard. They have no certain harbor in view, nor direct their course by any fixed star. But to him that knoweth not the port to which he is bound, no wind can be favor-

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able; neither can he who has not yet determined at what mark he is to shoot, direct his arrow aright. That this may not be our case, but that we may have a proper object to aim at, I propose to speak of the chief end of our being.

And to begin at the Father of Spirits, or pure intelligences, God, blessed for ever, completely happy in himself from all eternity, is his own happiness. His self-sufficiency [Αυτάρκεια], that external and infinite satisfaction and complacency he has in himself, is the peculiar and most complete felicity of that Supreme Being who derives his existence from himself, and has given being to every thing else. Which Chrysostom has well expressed by saying, that "it is God's peculiar property to stand in need of nothing."* And Claudius Victor beautifully describes him as "vested with all the majesty of creative power, comprehending in his infinite mind all the creatures to be afterward produced, having all the revolutions of time constantly present to his all-seeing eye, and being an immense and most glorious kingdom to himself."†

Yet all we can say of this Primary, Uncreated Majesty and Felicity, is but mere talking to little or no sort of purpose: for here, not only words fail us, but even thought is at a stand, and quite overpowered, when we survey the Supreme, self-existent Being,‡ perfectly happy and glorious in the sole enjoyment of his own own infinite perfections, throughout numberless ages, without angels, men, or any other creature: so that the poet had reason to say, "What eye so strong, that the matchless brightness of thy glory will not dazzle it, and make it close!"‖

Let us, therefore, descend into ourselves, but with a view to return to him again; and not only so, but in such a manner, that the end and design of our descending to inquire into our own situation, be, that we may, with greater advantage, return and reascend to God. For, if we inquire into our own ultimate end, this disquisition must rise above all other beings, and at last terminate in him; because he himself is that very end, and out of him, there is neither beginning nor end. The felicity of angels, which is an intermediate degree of happiness, we shall not insist on, not only because it is foreign to our purpose, but also, because our felicity and theirs will be found upon the matter, to be precisely the same.

With regard to our own happiness, we shall first show, that *such happiness really exists;* and next inquire, *what it is,* and wherein it consists.

We assert, then, that there is such a thing as human felicity, and this ought rather to be taken for granted as a matter unquestionable, than strictly proved. But when I speak of human felicity, I am well satisfied you will not imagine, I mean such a happiness as may be had from human things, but that I take the term subjectively, and understand by it the happiness of man. Now, he who would deny, that this is not only among the number of possibles, but actually attained by some part, at least, of the human race, would not only render himself unworthy of such happiness, but even of human nature itself; because he would thereby do all in his power to deprive it of its highest expectations and its greatest honor: but whoever allows, that all things were produced by the hand of an infinitely wise Creator, can not possibly doubt, that man, the head and ornament of all his visible works, was made capable of a proper and suitable end. The principal beauty of the creation consists in this, that all things in it are disposed in the most excellent order, and every particular intended for some noble and suitable end; and if this could not be said of man, who is the glory of the visible world what a great deformity must it be, how great a gap in nature! And this gap must be the greater, in that, as we have already observed, man is naturally endued with strong and vigorous desires toward such an end. Yet, on this absurd supposition, all such desires and expectations would be vain, and to no purpose; and so, something might be said in defence of that peevish and impatient expression which escaped the psalmist in a fit of excessive sorrow, and he might have an excuse for saying, *Why hast thou made all men in vain?* Psalm lxxxix. 47. This would not only have been a frightful gap in nature, but if I am allowed so to speak, at this rate, the whole human race must have been created in misery, and exposed to unavoidable torments, from which they could never have been relieved, had they been formed, not only capable of a good quite unattainable and altogether without their reach, but also with strong and restless desires toward that impossible good. Now, as this is by no means to be admitted, there must necessarily be some full, permanent, and satisfying good, that may be attained by man, and in the possession of which he must be truly happy.

When we revolve these things in our minds, do we not feel from within, a powerful impulse, exciting us to set aside all other cares, that we may discover the one chief good, and attain to the enjoyment of it? While we inhabit these bodies, I own, we lie under a necessity of using corporeal and fading things:

* Θεοῦ μάλιστα ἴδιον το ἀνένδεες.

† Regnabatque; potens in majestate creandî,
Et facienda videns, gignendaque; mente capaci,
Secula despiciens, et quicquid tempora volvunt
Presens semper habens: immensum mole beatâ
Regnum erat ipse sibi.

‡ Ανθιαστον τὸν ὄντως

‖ Τίνος ὄμμα σοφον
Ταῖς σαῖς στεροπαῖς
Ἀνακοπτόμενον
Ὀυ καμβοτει. Synos. Hym. Tert.

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but there is no necessity that we should be slaves to our bellies and the lusts of the flesh, or have our affections glued to this earth: nay, that it should be so, is the highest and most intolerable indignity. Can it be thought, that man was born merely to cram himself with victuals and drink, or gratify the other appetites of a body which he has in common with the brutes? to snuff up the wind, to entertain delusive and vain hopes all the days of his life, and, when that short scene of madness is over, to be laid in the grave, and reduced to its original dust? Far be it from us to draw such conclusions: there is certainly something beyond this, something so great and lasting, that, in respect of it, the short point of time we live here, with all its bustle of business and pleasures, is more empty and vanishing than smoke. "I am more considerable," says one, "and born to greater matters, than to become the slave of my diminutive body."* With how much greater truth might we speak thus, were we regenerated from heaven! Let us be ashamed to live with our heads bowed down, like grovelling beasts gazing upon the earth, or even to catch at the vain and airy shadows of science, while, in the mean time, we know not, or do not consider, whence we took our rise, and whither we are soon to return, what place is to receive our souls, when they are set at liberty from these bodily prisons. If it is the principal desire of your souls to understand the nature of this felicity, and the way that leads to it, *search the Scriptures;* for, *from them* alone, *we* all *think*, or profess to think, *we can have eternal life.* I exhort and beseech you, never to suffer so much as one day to pass, either through lazy negligence or too much eagerness in inferior studies, without reading some part of the sacred records with a pious and attentive disposition of mind; still joining with your reading, fervent prayer, that you may thereby draw down that divine light, without which spiritual things can not be read and understood. But with this light shining upon them, it is not possible to express how much sweeter you will find these inspired writings, than Cicero, Demosthenes, Homer, Aristotle, and all the other orators, poets, and philosophers. They reason about an imaginary felicity, and every one in his own way advances some precarious and uncertain thoughts upon it; but *this* book alone shows clearly, and with absolute certainty, what it is, and points out the way that leads to the attainment of it. This is that which prevailed with St. Augustine to study the Scriptures, and engaged his affections to them. "In Cicero, and Plato, and other such writers," says he, "I meet with many things wittily said, and things that have a moderate tendency to move the passions; but in none of them do I find these words, *Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.*"*

* Major sum, et ad majora gentius, quam ut sim mancipium mei corpusculi.

* Apud Ciceronem et Platonem, aliosque ejusmodi scriptores, multa sunt acute dicta, et leniter calentius sed in iis omnibus hoc non invenio, *Venite ad me*, &c. [Matt. xi. 28.]

† Boni fontem visere lucidum.

‡ Πρῶτόν τε, ἐχατόν τε, καὶ μέγιστον καλόν.

## LECTURE IV.

IN WHICH IT IS PROVED THAT HUMAN FELICITY CAN NOT BE FOUND EITHER IN THE EARTH OR EARTHLY THINGS.

WE are all in quest of one thing, but almost all of us out of the right road; therefore, to be sure, the longer and the more swiftly we move in a wrong path, the further we depart from the object of our desires: and if it is so, we can speak or think of nothing more proper and seasonable, than of inquiring about the only right way, whereby we may all come "to see the bright fountain of goodness."† I know you will remember, that on the last occasion, we proposed the most important of all questions, *viz.*, that concerning our ultimate end, or the way to discover true happiness: to which we asserted that all mankind do aspire with a natural, and therefore a constant and uniform ardor: or rather, we supposed, that all are sufficiently acquainted with this happiness, nay, really do, or at least may feel it within them, if they thoroughly know themselves. For this is the end of the labors of men; to this tend all their toils. This is the general aim of all, not only of the sharp-sighted, but the bleareyed and short-sighted; nay even of those that are quite blind, who though they can not see the mark they propose to themselves, yet are in hopes of reaching it at last: that is to say, though their ideas of it are very confused and imperfect, they all desire happiness in the obvious sense of the word. We have also observed, that this term, in its general acceptation, imports that full and perfect good which is suited to intelligent nature.‡ It is not to be doubted but the felicity of the Diety, as well as his being, is in himself, and from himself. But our inquiry is concerning our own happiness. We also positively determined, that there is some blessed end suited and adapted to our nature, and that this can by no means be denied; for since all parts of the universe have proper ends suited and adapted to their natures, that the most noble and excellent creature of the whole sublunary world should in this be defective, and therefore created in vain, would be so great a solecism, such a deformity in the whole fabric, and so unworthy of the supreme and all-wise Creator, that it can by no means be admitted, nor even so much as imagined. This point being settled, *viz.*, that there is some deter-

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minate good, in the possession whereof the mind of man may be fully satisfied and at perfect rest, we now proceed to inquire what this good is, and where it may be found.

The first thing, and at the same time a very considerable step toward this discovery, will be to show where and in what things this perfect good is *not* to be found; not only because this point being settled, it will be easier to determine wherein it actually consists; nay, the latter will naturally flow from the former; but also because, as has been observed, we shall find the far greater part of mankind pursuing vain shadows and phantoms of happiness, and, throughout their whole lives, wandering in a great variety of by-paths, seeking the way to make a proper improvement of life, almost always hunting for that chief good where it is not to be found. They must first be recalled from this rambling and fruitless course, before they can possibly be directed into the right road. I shall not spin out this negative proposition by dividing the subject of it into several branches, and insisting separately upon every one of them; but consider all these errors and mistakes, both vulgar and practical, speculative and philosophical, however numerous they may be, as comprehended under one general head, and fully obviate them all by one single proposition, which, with Divine assistance, I shall explain to you in this lecture, and that very briefly.

The proposition is, that human felicity, or that full and complete good that is suited to the nature of man, is not to be found in the earth, nor in earthly things.

Now, what if, instead of further proof or illustration, I should only say—If this perfect felicity is to be found within this visible world, or the verge of this earthly life, let him, I pray, who hath found it out, stand forth; let him tell who can, what star, of whatever magnitude, what constellation or combination of stars, has so favorable an aspect, and so benign an influence, or what is that singular good, or assemblage of good things in this earth, that can confer upon mankind a happy life. All things that, like bright stars, have hitherto attracted the eyes of men, vanishing in a few days, have proved themselves to be comets, not only of no benign, but even of pernicious influence: according to the saying, "There is no comet but what brings some mischief along with it."* All that have ever lived during so many ages that the world has hitherto lasted, noble and ignoble, learned and unlearned, fools and wise men, have gone in search of happiness: has ever any one of them all, in times past, or is there any one at this day that has said, Ευρηκα, I have found it? Different men have given different definitions and descriptions of it, and according to their various turns of mind, have painted it in a great variety of shapes; but, since the creation of the world, there has not been so much as one who ever pretended to say, Here it is, I have it, and have attained the full possession of it. Even those from whom most was to be expected, men of the utmost penetration, and most properly qualified for such researches, after all their labor and industry, have acknowledged their disappointment, and that they have not found it. But it would be wonderful indeed, that there should be any good suited to human nature, and to which mankind were born, and yet that it never fell to the share of any one individual of the sons of men: unless it be said, that the things of life, in this respect, resemble the speculations of the schools; and that, as they talk about objects of knowledge that were never known, so there is some good attainable by men, which was never actually attained.

But to look a little more narrowly into this matter, and take a transient view of the several periods of life. Infants are so far from attaining to happiness, that they have not yet arrived at human life; yet, if they are compared with those of riper years, they are in a low and improper sense, with regard to two things, innocence and ignorance, happier than men; for there is nothing that years add to infancy so invariably, and in so great abundance, as guilt and pollution; and the experience and knowledge of the world which they give us, do not so much improve the head, as they vex and distress the heart. So that the great man represented in the tragedy embracing his infant who knew nothing of his own misery, seems to have had some reason to say, that "those who know nothing enjoy the happiest life."* And to be sure, what we gain by our progress from infancy to youth, is that we thereby become more exposed to the miseries of life, and, as we improve in the knowledge of things, our pains and torments are also increased; for either children are put to servile employments, or mechanic arts; or if they happen to have a more genteel and liberal education, this very thing turns to a punishment, as they are thereby subjected to rods and chastisements, and the power of parents and instructers, which is often a kind of petty tyranny; and when the yoke is lightened with the greatest prudence, it still seems hard to be borne, as it is above the capacity of their young minds, thwarts their wishes and inclinations, and encroaches upon their beloved liberty.

Youth, put in full possession of this liberty, for the most part ceases to be master of itself; nor can it be truly said to be delivered from its former misery, as to exchange it for a worse, even that very liberty. It leaves the harbor to sail through quicksands and sirens; and when both these are passed, launches

* Ουδείς γὰρ κομήτης ὅστις οὐ κακόν φέρει.

* Τὸ γνῶναι μηδὲν ἐστιν ἡδιστος βίος.

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out into the deep sea. Alas! to what various fates is it there exposed! How many contrary winds does it meet with! How many storms threatening it with shipwreck! How many shocks has it to bear from avarice, ambition, and envy, either in consequence of the violent stirrings of those passions within itself, or the fierce attacks of them from without! Amid all these tempests, the ship is either early overwhelmed, or broken by storms; and worn out by old age, at last falls to pieces.

Nor does it much signify what state of life one enters into, or what rank he holds in human society; for all forms of business and conditions of life, however various you may suppose them to be, are exposed to a much greater variety of troubles and distresses, some to pressures more numerous and more grievous than others, but all to a great many, and every one to some peculiar to itself. If you devote yourself to ease and retirement, you can not avoid the reproach and uneasiness that constantly attend an indolent, a useless, and lazy life. If you engage in business, whatever it be, whether you commence merchant, soldier, farmer, or lawyer, you always meet with toil and hazard, and often with heavy misfortunes and losses. Celibacy exposes to solitude; marriage, to solicitude and cares. Without learning, you appear plain and unpolished; but on the other hand, the study of letters is a matter of immense labor, and, for the most part, brings in but very little, either with regard to the knowledge you acquire by it, or the conveniences of life it procures. But I will enlarge no further. You find the Greek and Latin poets lamenting the calamities of life in many parts of their works, and at great length: nor do they exaggerate in the least; they even fall short of the truth, and only enumerate a few evils out of many.

The Greek epigram ascribed by some to Prosidipus, by others to Crates the cynic philosopher, begins thus, "What state of life ought one to choose?" and having enumerated them all, concludes in this manner: "There are then only two things eligible, either never to have been born, or to die as soon as one makes his appearance in the world."*

But now, leaving the various periods and conditions of life, let us, with great brevity, run over those things which are looked upon to be the greatest blessings in it, and see whether any of them can make it completely happy. Can this be expected from a beautiful outside? No; this has rendered many miserable, but never made one happy. For suppose it to be sometimes attended with innocence, it is surely of a fading and perishing nature, "the sport of time or disease."† Can it be expected from riches? Surely no; for how little of them does the owner possess, even supposing his wealth to be ever so great! What a small part of them does he use or enjoy himself! And what has he of the rest but the pleasure of seeing them with his eyes? Let his table be loaded with the greatest variety of delicious dishes, he fills his belly out of one; and if he has a hundred beds, he lies but in one of them. Can the kingdoms, thrones, and sceptres of this world, confer happiness? No: we learn from the histories of all ages, that not a few have been tumbled down from these by sudden and unexpected revolutions, and those not such as were void of conduct or courage, but men of great and extraordinary abilities. And that those who met with no such misfortunes, were still far enough from happiness, is very plain from the situation of their affairs, and in many cases, from their own confession. The saying of Augustus is well known: "I wish I had never been married, and had died childless."* And the expression of Severus at his death, "I became all things, and yet it does not profit me."† But the most noted saying of all, and that which best deserves to be known, is that of the wisest and most flourishing king, as well as the greatest preacher, who, having exactly computed all the advantages of his exalted dignity and royal opulence, found this to be the sum total of all, and left it on record for the inspection of posterity and future ages, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.*

All this may possibly be true with regard to the external advantages of men; but may not happiness be found in the internal goods of the mind, such as wisdom and virtue? Suppose this granted; still that they may confer perfect felicity, they must of necessity be perfect themselves. Now, show me the man, who, even in his own judgment, has attained to perfection in wisdom and virtue: even those who were accounted the wisest, and actually were so, acknowledged they knew nothing: nor was there one among the most approved philosophers, whose virtues were not allayed with many blemishes. The same must be said of piety and true religion, which, though it is the beginning of felicity, and tends directly to perfection, yet, as in this earth it is not full and complete in itself, it can not make its possessors perfectly happy. The knowledge of the most exalted minds is very obscure, and almost quite dark, and their practice of virtue lame and imperfect. And indeed, who can have the boldness to boast of perfection in this respect, when he hears the great apostle complaining of *the law of the flesh*, and pathetically exclaiming, *Who shall deliver me from this body of death?* Rom. vii. 24. Besides, though wisdom and virtue, or piety were perfect, so long as we have bodies, we must at the same time have all bodily advan-

* Ποιην τοι βιότοιο τάμοις τρίβον.—Εστ' αρω τοῖν ὀυοῖν ενος ἅιρεσις ἢ τό γενεσθαι μεδεποτ ἢ βανεῖν ἀυτίκα νικτομαινον.

† Χρόνου ἢ νόσου παιγνιον.

* Ἄιθ' ὄφελον αγαμός τ' ἔμεναι αγονός τ' ἀπολεναι.

† Πάντα ἐγενόμην καὶ οὐ λυσιτελεῖ.

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tages, in order to perfect felicity. Therefore the satirist smartly ridicules the wise man of the stoics: "He is," says he, "free, honored, beautiful, king of kings, and particularly happy, except when he is troubled with phlegm."*

Since these things are so, we must raise our minds higher, and not live with our heads bowed down like the common sort of mankind: who, as St. Augustine expresses it, "look for a happy life in the region of death."† To set our hearts upon the perishing goods of this wretched life and its muddy pleasures, is not the happiness of men, but of hogs. And if pleasure is dirt, other things are but smoke. Were this the only good proposed to the desires and hopes of men, it would not have been so great a privilege to have been born. Be therefore advised, young gentlemen, and beware of this poisonous cup, lest your minds thereby become brutish, and fall into a fatal oblivion of your original, and your end. Turn that part of your composition which is Divine, to God its creator and father, without whom we can neither be happy, nor indeed *be* at all.

## LECTURE V.

### IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

THERE are many things that keep mankind employed, particularly business, or rather trifles; for so the affairs which are in this world considered as most important, ought to be called, when compared with that of minding our own valuable concerns, knowing ourselves, and truly consulting our highest interest; but how few are there that make this their study? The definition you commonly give of man, is, that he is a rational creature; though, to be sure, it is not applicable to the generality of mankind, unless you understand, that they are such, not actually, but in power only, and that very remote. They are, for the most part at least, more silly and foolish than children, and, like them, fond of toys and rattles; they fatigue themselves, running about and sauntering from place to place, but do nothing to purpose.

What a wonder it is, that souls of a heavenly original have so far forgot their native country, and are so immersed in dirt and mud, that there are few men who frequently converse with themselves about their own state, thinking gravely of their original and their end, seriously laying to heart, that as the poet expresses it, "good and evil are set before mankind;"‡ and who after mature consideration, not only think it the most wise and reasonable course, but are also fully resolved to exert themselves to the utmost, in order to arrive at a sovereign contempt of earthly things, and aspire to those enjoyments that are Divine and eternal. For our parts, I am fully persuaded we shall be of this mind, if we seriously reflect upon what has been said. For if there is, of necessity, a complete, permanent, and satisfying good intended for man, and no such good is to be found in the earth or earthly things, we must proceed farther, and look for it somewhere else; and, in consequence of this, conclude, that man is not quite extinguished by death, but removes to another place, and that the human soul is by all means immortal.

Many men have added a great variety of different arguments to support this conclusion, some of them strong and solid, and others, to speak freely, too metaphysical, and of little strength, especially as they are as obscure, as easily denied, and as hard to be proved, as that very conclusion, in support of which they are adduced.

They who reason from the immaterial nature of the soul, and from its being infused into the body, as also from its method of operation, which is confined to none of the bodily organs, may easily prevail with those who believe these principles, to admit the truth of the conclusion they want to draw from them; but if they meet with any who obstinately deny the premises, or even doubt the truth of them, it will be a matter of difficulty to support such hypotheses with clear and conclusive arguments. If the soul of man was well acquainted with itself, and fully understood its own nature, if it could investigate the nature of its union with the body, and the method of its operation therein, we doubt not but thence it might draw these and other such arguments of its immortality; but since, shut up in the prison of a dark body, it is so little known, and so incomprehensible to itself, and since, in so great obscurity, it can scarce, if at all, discover the least of its own features and complexion, it would be a very difficult matter for it to say much concerning its internal nature, or nicely determine the methods of its operation. But it would be surprising, if any one should deny, that the very operations it performs, especially those of the more noble and exalted sort, are strong marks and conspicuous characters of its excellence and immortality.

Nothing is more evident than that, besides life, and sense, and animal spirits, which he has in common with the brutes, there is in man something more exalted, more pure, and that more nearly approaches to Divinity. God has given to the former a sensitive soul, but to us a mind also: and, to speak distinctly, that spirit which is peculiar to man, and whereby he is raised above all other animals, ought to be called mind rather than soul.* Be this as it may, it is hardly possible to say, how vastly the human mind excels the other with regard to its wonderful powers, and next

* ——————Dives,
Liber, honoratus, pulcher, rex denique regum,
Præcipue fœlix, nisi cum pituita molesta est.

† Beatam vitam quærunt in regione mortis.

‡ Ὥστε τοῖς ἀνθρώποισι κακὸν τ' ἀγαθόν τε τέτυκται.

* Animus potius dicendus est quam anima.

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to them, with respect to its works, devices, and inventions. For it performs such great and wonderful things, that the brutes, even those of the greatest sagacity, can neither imitate, nor at all understand, much less invent. Nay, man, though he is much less in bulk, and inferior in strength to the greatest part of them, yet, as lord and king of them all, he can, by surprising means, bend and apply the strength and industry of all the other creatures, the virtues of all herbs and plants, and, in a word, all the parts and powers of this visible world, to the convenience and accommodation of his own life. He also builds cities, erects commonwealths, makes laws, conducts armies, fits out fleets, measures not only the earth, but the heavens also, and investigates the motions of the stars. He foretells eclipses many years before they happen; and, with very little difficulty, sends his thoughts to a great distance, bids them visit the remotest cities and countries, mount above the sun and the stars, and even the heavens themselves.

But all these things are inconsiderable, and contribute but little to our present purpose, in respect of that one incomparable dignity that results to the human mind from its being capable of religion, and having indelible characters thereof naturally stamped upon it. It acknowledges a God, and worships him; it builds temples to his honor; it celebrates his never enough exalted majesty with sacrifices, prayers, and praises; depends upon his bounty; implores his aid; and so carries on a constant correspondence with heaven: and, which is a very strong proof of its being originally from heaven, it hopes at last to return to it. And, truly, in my judgment, this previous impression and hope of immortality, and these earnest desires after it, are a very strong evidence of that immortality. These impressions, though in most men they lie overpowered and almost quite extinguished by the weight of their bodies, and an extravagant love to present enjoyments; yet, now and then, in time of adversity, break forth and exert themselves, especially under the pressure of severe distempers, and at the approaches of death. But those whose minds are purified, and their thoughts habituated to Divine things, with what constant and ardent wishes do they breathe after that blessed immortality! How often do their souls complain within them, that they have dwelt so long in these earthly tabernacles! Like exiles, they earnestly wish, make interest, and struggle hard to regain their native country. Moreover does not that noble neglect of the body and its senses, and that contempt of all the pleasures of the flesh, which these heavenly souls have attained, evidently show, that, in a short time, they will be taken hence, and that the body and soul are of a very different, and almost contrary nature to one another; that, therefore, the duration of the one depends not upon the other, but is quite of another kind; and that the soul, set at liberty from the body, is not only exempted from death, but, in some sense, then begins to live, and then first sees the light? Had we not this hope to support us, what ground should we have to lament our first nativity, which placed us in a life so short, so destitute of good, and so crowded with miseries; a life which we pass entirely in grasping phantoms of felicity, and suffering real calamities! So that if there were not, beyond this, a life and happiness that more truly deserves these names, who can help seeing, that, of all creatures, man would be the most miserable, and, of all men, the best the most unhappy?

For, although every wise man looks upon the belief of the immortality of the soul, as one of the great and principal supports of religion, there may possibly be some rare, exalted, and truly divine minds, who would choose the pure and noble path of virtue for its own sake, would constantly walk in it, and out of love to it, would not decline the severest hardships, if they should happen to be exposed to them on its account. Yet it can not be denied, that the common sort of Christians, though they are really and at heart sound believers and true Christians, fall very far short of this attainment, and would scarcely, if at all, embrace virtue and religion, if you take away the rewards; which I think the Apostle Paul hints at in this expression, *If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men the most miserable.* 1 Cor. xv. 19. The apostle, indeed, does not intend these words as a direct proof of the immortality of the soul in a separate state, but an argument to prove the resurrection of the body; which is a doctrine near akin, and closely connected with the former. For that great restoration is added as an instance of the superabundance and immensity of the Divine goodness, whose pleasure it is, that not only the better and more divine part of man, which, upon its return to its original source, is, without the body, capable of enjoying a perfectly happy and eternal life, should have a glorious immortality, but also that this earthly tabernacle, as being the faithful attendant and constant companion of the soul through all its toils and labors in this world, be also admitted to a share and participation of its heavenly and eternal felicity; that so, according to our Lord's expression, every faithful soul may have returned into its bosom, *good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over.* Luke vi. 38.

Let our belief of this immortality be founded entirely on Divine Revelation, and then like a city fortified with a rampart of earth drawn round it, let it be outwardly guarded and defended by reason; which in this case, suggests arguments as strong and convincing as the subject will admit of. If any one, in the present case, promises demonstration, his undertaking is certainly too much, if he desires or expects it from another, he requires

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too much. There are, indeed, very few demonstrations in philosophy, if you except mathematical sciences, that can be truly and strictly so called, and, if we inquire narrowly into the matter, perhaps we shall find none at all: nay, if even the mathematical demonstrations are examined by the strict rules and ideas of Aristotle, the greatest part of them will be found imperfect and defective. The saying of that philosopher is, therefore, wise and applicable to many cases: "Demonstrations are not to be expected in all cases, but so far as the subject will admit of them."* But if we were well acquainted with the nature and essence of the soul, or even its precise method of operation on the body, it is highly probable we could draw thence evident and undeniable demonstrations of that immortality which we are now asserting: whereas, so long as the mind of man is so little acquainted with its own nature, we must not expect any such.

But that unquenchable thirst of the soul, which we have already mentioned, is a strong proof of its Divine nature: a thirst not to be allayed with the impure and turbid waters of any earthly good, or of all worldy enjoyments taken together. It thirsts after the never-failing fountain of good, according to that of the psalmist, *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks:* it thirsts after a good, invisible, immaterial, and immortal, to the enjoyment whereof the ministry of a body is so far from being absolutely necessary, that it feels itself shut up and confined by that to which it is now united, as by a partition-wall, and groans under the pressure of it. And those souls that are quite insensible of this thirst, are certainly buried in the body, as in the carcass of an impure hog; nor have they so entirely divested themselves of this appetite we have mentioned, nor can they possibly so divest themselves of it, as not to feel it severely, to their great misery, sooner or later, either when they awake out of their lethargy within the body, or when they are obliged to leave it. To conclude: Nobody, I believe, will deny, that we are to form our judgment of the true nature of the human mind, not from the sloth and stupidity of the most degenerate and vilest of men, but from the sentiments and fervent desires of the best and wisest of the species.

These sentiments concerning the immortality of the soul in its future existence, not only include no impossibility or absurdity in them, but are also every way agreeable to sound reason, wisdom, and virtue, to the Divine economy, and the natural wishes and desires of men. Wherefore, most nations have, with the greatest reason, universally adopted them, and the wisest in all countries and in all ages have cheerfully embraced them; and though they could not confirm them with any argument of irresistible force, yet they felt something within them that corresponded with this doctrine, and always looked upon it as most beautiful and worthy of credit. "Nobody," says Atticus in Cicero, "shall drive me from the immortality of the soul."* And Seneca's words are, "I took pleasure to inquire into the eternity of the soul, and even indeed to believe it. I resigned myself to so glorious a hope, for now I begin to despise the remains of a broken constitution, as being to remove into that immensity of time, and into the possession of endless ages."† O how much does the soul gain by this removal!

As for you, young gentlemen, I doubt not but you will embrace this doctrine, not only as agreeable to reason, but as it is an article of the Christian faith. I only put you in mind to revolve it often within yourselves, and with a serious disposition of mind; for you will find it the strongest incitement to wisdom, good morals, and true piety. Nor can you imagine anything that will more effectually divert you from a foolish admiration of present and perishing things, and from the allurements and sordid pleasures of this earthly body. Consider, I pray you, how unbecoming it is to make a heaven-born soul, that is to live for ever, a slave to the meanest, vilest, and most trifling things; and, as it were, to thrust down to the kitchen a prince that is obliged to leave his country only for a short time. St. Bernard pathetically addresses himself to the body in favor of the soul, persuading it to treat the latter honorably, not only on account of its dignity, but also for the advantage that will thereby redound to the body itself: "Thou hast a noble guest, O flesh! a most noble one indeed, and all thy safety depends upon its salvation: it will certainly remember thee for good, if thou serve it well; and when it comes to its Lord, it will put him in mind of thee, and the mighty God himself will come to make thee, who art now a vile body, like unto his glorious One; and, O wretched flesh, he who came in humility and obscurity to redeem souls, will come in great majesty to glorify thee, and every eye shall see him."‡ Be mindful, therefore, young gentlemen, of your better part, and accustom it to think of its own eternity, always and everywhere having its eyes fixed upon that world to which it is most nearly related. And thus it will look down, as from on high, on all those things which the world considers as lofty and

* Ὅυκ ἐν πᾶσιν ἀποδείξεις ἀιτήτεον, αλλ' ἐφ' ὅσον δέχεται τό ὑποκείμενον.

* Me nemo de immortalitate depellet.

† Juvabat de æternitate animarum quærere, imo mehercule credere: dabam me spei tantæ, jam enim reliquias infractæ ætatis contemnebam, in immensum illud tempus, et in possessionem omnis ævis transiturus.—Sen. Epis. 102.

‡ Nobilem hospitem habes, O caro! nobilem valde, et tota tua salus de ejus salute pendet: omnino etiam memor erit tui in bonum, si bene servieris illi; et cum pervenerit ad Dominum suum, suggeret ei de te, et veniet ipse Dominus virtutum, et te vile corpus configurabit corpori suo glorioso, qui ad animas redimendas humilis ante venerat, et occultus, pro te glorificando, O misera caro, sublimis veniet et manifestus.



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exalted, and will see them under its feet; and of all the things which are confined within the narrow verge of this present life, it will have nothing to desire, and nothing to fear.

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## LECTURE VI.

### HAPPINESS OF THE LIFE TO COME.

Of all the thoughts of men, there is certainly none that more often occurs to a serious mind that has its own interest at heart, than that to which all others are subordinate and subservient, with regard to the intention, the ultimate and most desirable end, of all our toils and cares, and even of life itself. And this important thought will the more closely beset the mind, the more sharp-sighted it is in prying into the real torments, the delusive hopes, and the false joys of this our wretched state; which is indeed so miserable, that it can never be sufficiently lamented; and as for laughter amid so many sorrows, dangers, and fears, it must be considered as downright madness. Such was the opinion of the wisest of kings: *I have said of laughter*, says he, *It is mad; and of mirth, What doth it?* Eccl. ii. 2. We have, therefore, no cause to be much surprised at the bitter complaints which a grievous weight of afflictions has extorted, even from great and good men: nay, it is rather a wonder, if the same causes do not often oblige us to repeat them.

If we look about us, how often are we shocked to observe either the calamities of our country, or the sad disasters of our relations and friends, whom we have daily occasion to mourn, either as groaning under the pressure of poverty, pining away under languishing diseases, tortured by acute ones, or carried off by death, while we ourselves are, in like manner, very soon to draw tears from the eyes of others! Nay, how often are we a burden to ourselves, and groan heavily under afflictions of our own, that press hard upon our estates, our bodies, or our minds! Even those who seem to meet with the fewest and the least inconveniences in this life, and dazzle the eyes of spectators with the brightness of a seemingly constant and uniform felicity, beside that they often suffer from secret vexations and cares which destroy their inward peace, and prey upon their distressed hearts, how uncertain, weak, and brittle, is that false happiness which appears about them, and when it shines brightest, how easily is it broken to pieces! So that it has been justly said, "They want another felicity to secure that which they are already possessed of."* If, after all, there are some whose minds are hardened against all the forms and appearances of external things, and who look down with equal contempt upon all the events of this world, whether of a dreadful or an engaging aspect, even this disposition of mind does not make them happy: nor do they think themselves so; they have still something to make them uneasy, the obscure darkness that overspreads their minds, their ignorance of heavenly things, and the strength of their carnal affections, not yet entirely subdued. And though these we are now speaking of, are by far the noblest and most beautiful part of the human race, yet, if they had not within them that blessed hope of removing hence, in a little time, to the regions of light, the more severely they feel the straits and afflictions to which their souls are exposed by being shut up in this narrow earthly cottage, so much they certainly would be more miserable than the rest of mankind.

As oft, therefore, as we reflect upon these things, we shall find that the whole comes to this one conclusion: "There is certainly some end;"*—there is, to be sure, some end suited to the nature of man, and worthy of it; some particular, complete, and permanent good; and since we in vain look for it within the narrow verge of this life, and among the many miseries that swarm on it from beginning to end, we must of necessity conclude that there is certainly some more fruitful country, and a more lasting life, to which our felicity is reserved, and into which we shall be received when we remove hence. This is not our rest, nor have we any place of residence here: it is the region of fleas and gnats; and while we search for happiness among these mean and perishing things, we are not only sure to be disappointed, but also not to escape those miseries which, in great numbers, continually beset us. So that we may apply to ourselves the saying of the famous artist confined in the island of Crete, and truly say, "The earth and the sea are shut up against us, and neither of them can favor our escape: the way to heaven is alone open, and this way we will strive to go."†

Thus far we have advanced by degrees, and very lately we have discoursed upon the immortality of the soul, to which we have added the resurrection of our earthly body, by way of appendix. It remains that we now inquire into the happiness of the life to come.

Yet, I own, I am almost deterred from entering upon this inquiry, by the vast obscurity and sublimity of the subject, which in its nature is such, that we can neither understand it, nor, if we could, can it be expressed in words. The divine apostle, who had had some glimpse of this felicity, describes it no otherwise than by his silence, calling the words he heard, *unspeakable, and such as it was not lawful for a man to utter.*‡ 2 Cor. xii. 4. And if *he* neither could nor would ex-

* Alia felicitate ad illam elicitatem tuendam opus est.

* Ἔστιν ἄρα τέλος.

† Nec tellus nostra, nec patet unda fugæ,
Restat iter cœli, cœlo tentabimus ire.

‡ Ἄῤῥητα ῥήματα, ἃ, οὐκ ἐξὸν ἀνθρώπῳ λαλῆσαι.

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press what he saw, far be it from us boldly to force ourselves into or intrude upon what we have seen; especially as the same apostle, in another place, acquaints us, for our future caution, that this was unwarrantably done by some rash and forward persons in his own time. But since in the sacred archives of this new world, however invisible and unknown to us, we have some maps and descriptions of it suited to our capacity: we are not only allowed to look at them, but as they were drawn for that very purpose, it would certainly be the greatest ingratitude, as well as the highest negligence in us, not to make some improvement of them. Here, however, we must remember what a great odds there is between the description of a kingdom in a small and imperfect map, and the extent and beauty of that very kingdom when viewed by the traveller's eye; and how much greater the difference must be between the felicity of that heavenly kingdom to which we are aspiring, and all, even the most striking figurative expressions, taken from the things of this earth, that are used to convey some faint and imperfect notion of it to our minds. What are these things, the false glare and shadows whereof, in this earth, are pursued with such keen and furious impetuosity—riches, honors, pleasures? All these, in their justest, purest, and sublimest sense, are comprehended in this blessed life: it is *a treasure*, that can neither fail nor be carried away by force or fraud: it is *an inheritance* uncorrupted and undefiled, *a crown* that fadeth not away; a never-failing stream of joy and delight: it is a marriage-feast, and of all others the most joyous and most sumptuous; one that always satisfies, and never cloys the appetite: it is an eternal spring, and an everlasting light, a day without an evening: it is a paradise, where the lilies are always white and in full bloom, the saffron blooming, the trees sweat out their balsams, and the tree of life in the midst thereof: it is a city, where the houses are built of living pearls, the gates of precious stones, and the streets paved with the purest gold. Yet, all these are nothing but veils of the happiness to be revealed on that most blessed day: nay, the light itself, which we have mentioned among the rest, though it be the most beautiful ornament in this visible world, is at best but a shadow of that heavenly glory; and how small soever that portion of this inaccessible brightness may be, which, in the sacred Scriptures, shines upon us through these veils, it certainly very well deserves that we should often turn our eyes toward it, and view it with the closest attention.

1. Now, the first that necessarily occurs in the constitution of happiness, is a full and complete deliverance from every evil and every grievance; which we may as certainly expect to meet with in that heavenly life, as it is impossible to be attained while we sojourn here below. All tears shall be wiped away from our eyes, and every cause and occasion of tears for ever removed from our sight. There, there are no tumults, no wars, no poverty, no death, nor disease; there, there is neither mourning, nor fear, nor sin, which is the source and fountain of all other evils: there is neither violence within doors nor without, nor any complaint, in the streets of that blessed city. There, no friend goes out, nor enemy comes in.

2. Full vigor of body and mind, health, beauty, purity, and perfect tranquillity.

3. The most delightful society of angels, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and all the saints; among whom there are no reproaches, contentions, controversies, nor party-spirit, because there are, there, none of the sources whence they can spring, nor anything to encourage their growth; for there is, there, particularly, no ignorance, no blind self-love, no vain-glory nor envy, which is quite excluded from those divine regions; but, on the contrary, perfect charity, whereby every one, together with his own felicity, enjoys that of his neighbors, and is happy in the one as well as the other: hence there is among them a kind of infinite reflection and multiplication of happiness, like that of a spacious hall adorned with gold and precious stones, dignified with a full assembly of kings and potentates, and having its walls quite covered with the brightest looking-glasses.

4. But what infinitely exceeds, and quite eclipses all the rest, is that boundless ocean of happiness, which results from the beatific vision of the ever-blessed God; without which, neither the tranquillity they enjoy, nor the society of saints, nor the possession of any particular finite good, nor indeed of all such taken together, can satisfy the soul, or make it completely happy. The manner of this enjoyment we can only expect to understand, when we enter upon the full possession of it; till then, to dispute and raise many questions about it, is nothing but vain, foolish talking, and fighting with phantoms of our own brain. But the schoolmen, who confine the whole of this felicity to bare speculation, or, as they call it, *actus intellectualis*, an *intellectual act*, are, in this, as in many other cases, guilty of great presumption, and their conclusion is built upon a very weak foundation. For although contemplation be the highest and noblest act of the mind, yet complete happiness necessarily requires some present good suited to the whole man, the whole soul, and all its faculties. Nor is it any objection to this doctrine, that the whole of this felicity is commonly comprehended in Scripture under the term of *vision*; for the mental vision, or contemplation of the primary and infinite good, most properly signifies, or at least includes in it, the full enjoyment of that good; and the observation of the Rabbins concerning Scripture phrases, "That words expressing the senses, include also the affections naturally arising from those sensations,"* is very well

* Verba sensus connotant affectus.

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known. Thus *knowing* is often put for approving and loving; and *seeing* for enjoying and attaining. *Taste and see that God is good*, says the psalmist. And, in fact, it is no small pleasure to lovers to dwell together, and mutually to enjoy the sight of one another. "Nothing is more agreeable to lovers, than to live together."*

We must, therefore, by all means conclude, that this beatific vision includes in it not only a distinct and intuitive knowledge of God, but, so to speak, such a knowledge as gives us the enjoyment of that most perfect Being, and, in some sense, unites us to him; for such a vision it must, of necessity, be, that converts that love of the Infinite Good which blazes in the souls of the saints, into full possession; that crowns all their wishes, and fills them with an abundant and overflowing fulness of joy, that vents itself in everlasting blessings and songs of praise.

And this is the only doctrine, if you believe it (and I make no doubt but you do), this, I say, is the only doctrine that will transport your whole souls, and raise them up on high. Hence you will learn to trample under feet all the turbid and muddy pleasures of the flesh, and all the allurements and splendid trifles of the present world. However those earthly enjoyments that are swelled up, by false names and the strength of imagination, to a vast size, may appear grand and beautiful, and still greater and more engaging to those that are unacquainted with them: how small, how inconsiderable do they all appear to a soul that looks for a heavenly country, that expects to share the joys of angels, and has its thoughts constantly employed about these objects! To conclude, the more the soul withdraws, so to speak, from the body, and retires within itself, the more it rises above itself; and the more closely it cleaves to God, the more the life it lives in this earth resembles that which it will enjoy in heaven, and the larger foretastes it has of the first-fruits of that blessed harvest. Aspire, therefore, to holiness, young gentlemen, *without which no man shall see the Lord.*

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## LECTURE VII.

### THE BEING OF GOD.

Though, on most subjects, the opinions of men are various, and often quite opposite, insomuch that they seem to be more remarkable for the vast variety of their sentiments, than that of their faces and languages; there are, however, two things wherein all nations are agreed, and in which there seems to be a perfect harmony throughout the whole human race—*the desire of happiness* and *a sense of religion.* The former no man desires to shake off: and though some, possibly, would willingly part with the latter, it is not in their power to eradicate it entirely: they can not banish God altogether out of their thoughts, nor extinguish every spark of religion within them. It is certainly true, that, for the most part, this desire of happiness wanders in darkness from one object to another without fixing upon any; and the sense of religion is either suffered to lie inactive, or deviates into superstition. Yet, the great Creator of the world employs these two, as the materials of a fallen building, to repair the ruins of the human race, and as handles whereby he draws his earthern vessels out of the deep gulf of misery into which it is fallen.

Of the former of these, that is, felicity, we have already spoken on another occasion: we shall therefore now, with Divine assistance, employ some part of our time in considering that sense of religion which is naturally impressed on the mind of man.

Nor will our labor, I imagine, be unprofitably employed in collecting together those few general principles in which so many and so very dissimilar forms of religion and sentiments, extremely different, harmoniously agree; for, as every science most properly begins with universal propositions and things more generally known, so, in the present case, besides the other advantages, it will be no small support to a weak and wavering mind, that amid all the disputes and contentions subsisting between the various sects and parties in religion, the great and necessary articles, at least, of our faith, are established in some particulars by the general consent of mankind, and, in all the rest, by that of the whole Christian world.

I would therefore most earnestly wish, that your minds, *rooted and established in the faith*, were firmly united in this delightful bond of religion, which, like a golden chain, will be no burden, but an ornament; not a yoke of slavery, but a badge of true and generous liberty. I would by no means have you to be Christians upon the authority of mere tradition, or education, and the example and precepts of parents and masters, but purely from a full conviction of your own understandings, and a fervent disposition of the will and affections proceeding therefrom. For piety "is the sole and only good among mankind,"* and you can expect none of the fruits of religion, unless the root of it be well laid, and firmly established by faith: "for all the virtues are the daughters of faith,"† says Clemens Alexandrinus.

Lucretius, with very ill-advised praises, extols his favorite Grecian philosopher as one fallen down from heaven to be the deliverer of mankind, and dispel their distressing terrors and fears, because he fancied he had found out an effectual method to banish all religion entirely out of the minds of men. And to say the truth, in no age has there been want-

* Ὀνδὲν οὕτω των φίλων ως το συζην.

* Ἐν γὰρ καὶ μόνον ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἀγαθὸν ἡ εὐσέβεια. Trismegist.

† Ἥδεται γὰρ ἀρεταὶ πίστεως θυγάτερες.

ing brutish souls, too much enslaved to their corporeal senses, who would wish these opinions to be true; yet, after all, there are very few of them who are able to persuade themselves of the truth of those vicious principles which, with great impudence and importunity, they commonly inculcate upon others: they belch out with full mouth their foolish dreams, often in direct opposition to conscience and knowledge; and what they unhappily would wish to be true, they can scarcely, if at all, believe themselves. You are acquainted with Horace's recantation, wherein he tells us, that "he had been long bigoted to the mad tenets of the Epicurean philosophy, but found himself at last obliged to alter his sentiments, and deny all he had asserted before."*

Some souls lose the whole exercise of their reason, because they inform bodies which labor under the defect of temperament or of proper organs; yet, you continue to give the old definition of man, and call him *a rational creature;* and should any one think proper to call him *a religious creature*, he would, to be sure, have as much reason on his side, and needed not fear his opinion would be rejected, because of a few madmen who laugh at religion. Nor is it improbable, as some of the ancients have asserted, that those few among the Greeks who were called Atheists, had not that epithet because they absolutely denied the being of God, but only because they rejected and justly laughed at the fictitious and ridiculous deities of the nations.

Of all the institutions and customs received among men, we meet with nothing more solemn and general that of religion and sacred rites performed to the honor of some deity; which is a very strong argument, that that persuasion, in preference to any other, is written, nay, rather engraven, in strong and indelible characters upon the mind of man. This is, as it were, the name of the great Creator stamped upon the noblest of all his visible works, that thus man may acknowledge himself to be his, and, concluding from the inscription he finds impressed upon his mind, that what belongs to God ought, in strict justice, to be restored to him,† be wholly reunited to his first principle, that immense Ocean of goodness whence he took his rise. The distemper that has invaded mankind is, indeed, grievous and epidemical: it consists in a mean and degenerate love to the body and corporeal things, and, in consequence of this, a stupid and brutish forgetfulness of God, though he can never be entirely blotted out of the mind. This forgetfulness, a few, and but very, alarmed and awakened by the Divine rod, early shake off. And even in the most stupid, and such as are buried in the deepest sleep, the original impression some times discovers itself when they are under the pressure of some grievous calamity, or on the approach of danger, and especially upon a near prospect of death. Then, the thoughts of God, that had lain hid and been long suppressed, forced out by the weight of pain and the impressions of fear, come to be remembered; and the whole soul being, as it were, roused out of its long and deep sleep, men begin to look about them, inquire what the matter is, and seriously reflect whence they came, and whither they are going. Then, the truth comes naturally from their hearts. The stormy sea alarmed even profane sailors so much, that they awaked the sleeping prophet: *Awake*, say they, *thou sleeper, and call upon thy God.* Jonah i. 6.

But however weak or imperfect this original or innate knowledge of God may be, it discovers itself everywhere so far, at least, that you can meet with no man, or society of men, that, by some form of worship or ceremonies, do not acknowledge a Deity, and, according to their capacity, and the custom of their country, pay him homage. It is true, some late travellers have reported, that, in that part of the new world called Brazil, there are some tribes of the natives among whom you can discover no symptoms that they have the least sense of a Deity: but, besides that the truth of this report is very far from being well ascertained, and that the observation might have been too precipitately made by new-comers who had not made sufficient inquiry—even supposing it to be true, it is not of such consequence, when opposed to all the rest of the world, and the universal agreement of all nations and ages upon this subject, that the least regard should be paid to it. Nor must we imagine that it at all lessens the weight of this great argument, which has been generally and most justly urged, both by ancients and moderns, to establish the first and common foundation of religion.

Now, whoever accurately considers this universal sense of religion of which we have been speaking, will find that it comprehends in it these particulars: 1. That there is a God. 2. That he is to be worshipped. 3. Which is a consequence of the former, that he regards the affairs of men. 4. That he has given them a law, enforced by rewards and punishments, and that the distribution of these is, in a very great measure, reserved to a life different from that we live in this earth, is the firm belief, if not of all, at least of the generality of mankind. And though our present purpose does not require that we should confirm the truth of all these points with those strong arguments that might be urged in their favor, but rather that we should take them for granted, as being sufficiently established by the common consent of mankind; we shall, however, subjoin a few thoughts on each of them separately, with as great brevity and perspicuity as we can.

* Parcus Deorum cultor et infrequens.
Insanientis dum sapientiæ
Consultus erro, &c. Od. xxxiv., lib. 1.

† Τα τοῦ Θεοῦ τῳ Θεῳ.

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1. THAT THERE IS A GOD. And here I can not help fearing, that when we endeavor to confirm this leading truth, with regard to the first and uncreated being, by a long and laborED series of arguments, we may seem, instead of a service, to do a kind of injury to God and man both. For why should we use the pitiful light of a candle to discover the sun, and eagerly go about to prove the being of Him who gave being to everything else—who alone exists necessarily, nay, we may boldly say, who alone exists; seeing all other things were by him extracted out of nothing, and, when compared with him, they are nothing, and even less than nothing, and vanity? And would not any man think himself insulted, should it be suspected that he doubted of the being of Him, without whom he could neither doubt, nor think, nor be at all? This persuasion, without doubt, is innate, and strongly impressed upon the mind of man, if anything at all can be said to be so.* Nor does Iamblicus scruple to say, that "to know God is our very being;"† and in another place, that "it is the very being of the soul to know God, on whom it depends."‡ Nor would he think amiss, who, in this, should espouse the opinion of Plato; for, to know this, is nothing more than to call to remembrance what was formerly impressed upon the mind; and when one forgets it (which, alas! is too much the case of us all), he has as many remembrancers, so to speak, within him, as he has members, and as many without him, as the individuals of the vast variety of creatures to be seen around him. Let, therefore, the indolent soul that has almost forgot God, be roused up, and every now and then say to itself, "Behold this beautiful starry heaven," &c.

But because we have too many of that sort of fools that say in their heart, "There is no God" (and if we are *not to answer a fool, so as to be like unto him*, yet we are, by all means, to *answer him according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit)*; again, because a criminal forgetfulness of this leading truth is the sole source of all the wickedness in the world; and finally, because it may not be quite unprofitable, nor unpleasant, even to the best of men, sometimes to recollect their thoughts on this subject, but, on the contrary, a very pleasant exercise to every well-disposed mind, to reflect upon what a solid and unshaken foundation the whole fabric of religion is built, and to think and speak of the Eternal Fountain of goodness and of all other beings, and consequently of his necessary existence; we reckon it will not be amiss to give a few thoughts upon it. Therefore, not to insist upon several arguments, which are urged with great advantage on this subject, we shall produce only one or two, and shall reason thus.

It is by all means necessary that there should be some eternal being, otherwise nothing could ever have been; since it must be a most shocking contradiction to say, that anything could have produced itself out of nothing. But if we say, that anything existed from eternity, it is most agreeable to reason that that should be an Eternal Mind, or Thinking Being, that so the noblest property may be ascribed to the most exalted being. Nay, that Eternal Being must, of absolute necessity, excel in wisdom and power, and, indeed, in every other perfection, since it must itself be uncreated, and the cause and origin of all the creatures; otherwise, some difficulty will remain concerning their production. And thus, all the parts of the universe, taken singly, suggest arguments in favor of their Creator.

The beautiful order of the universe, and the mutual relation that subsists between all its parts, present us with another strong and convincing argument. This order is itself an effect, and, indeed, a wonderful one; and it is also evidently distinct from the things themselves, taken singly; therefore it must proceed from some cause, and a cause endowed with superior wisdom: for it would be the greatest folly, as well as impudence, to say it could be owing to mere chance. Now, it could not proceed from man, nor could it be owing to any concert or mutual agreement between the things themselves, separately considered; seeing the greatest part of them are evidently incapable of consultation and concert: it must, therefore, proceed from some one superior being, and that being is GOD, "who commanded the stars to move by stated laws, the fruits of the earth to be produced at different seasons, the changeable moon to shine with borrowed light, and the sun with his own."*

He is the monarch of the universe, and the most absolute monarch in nature. For who else assigned to every rank of creatures its particular form and uses, so that the stars, subjected to no human authority or laws, should be placed on high, and serve to bring about to the earth and the inhabitants thereof the regular returns of day and night, and distinguish the seasons of the year? Let us take in particular, any one species of sublunary things, for instance, man, the noblest of all, and see how he came by the form wherewith he is invested, that frame or constitution of body, that vigor of mind, and that precise rank in the nature of things, which he now obtains, and no other. He must, certainly, either have made choice of these things for himself, or must have had them assigned him by another, whom we must consider as the principal actor, and sole architect of the whole fabric. That he made choice of them for himself, nobody will imagine; for either he

* Primum visibile lux, et primum intelligibile Deus.
† Esse nostrum est Deum cognoscere.
‡ Esse animæ, est quoddam intelligere, scilicet Deum, unde dependet.

* ——————Qui lege moveri
Sidera, qui fruges diverso tempore nasci,
Qui variam Phœben alino jusserit igne
Compleri, solemque suo.

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made this choice before he had any existence of his own, or after he began to be: but it is not easy to say which of these suppositions is most absurd. It remains, therefore, that he must be indebted for all he enjoys, to the mere good pleasure of his great and all-wise Creator, who framed his earthly body in such a wonderful and surprising manner, animated him with his own breath, and thus introduced him into this great palace of his, which we now behold, where his *manifold wisdom*, most properly so called, displays itself so gloriously in the whole machine, and in every one of its wonderfully variegated parts.

The first argument, taken from the very being of things, may be further illustrated by the same instance of man. For unless the first man was created, we must suppose an infinite series of generations from eternity, and so, the human race must be supposed independent, and to owe its being to itself. But, by this hypothesis, mankind came into the world by generation, therefore every individual of the race owes its being to another; consequently, the whole race is from itself, and at the same time from another, which is absurd. Therefore, the hypothesis implies a plain and evident contradiction. "O! immense wisdom that produced the world! Let us for ever admire the riches and skill of thy right hand;"* often viewing with attention thy wonders, and, while we view them, frequently crying out with the divine psalmist, *O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all. The earth is full of thy riches!* Psalm civ. 24. *From everlasting to everlasting thou art God, and besides thee, there is no other.* Psalm xc. 2. And with Hermes, "The Father of all, being himself understanding, life, and brightness, created man like himself, and cherished him as his own son. Thou Creator of universal nature, who hast extended the earth, who poisest the heavens, and commandest the waters to flow from all parts of the sea, we praise thee, who art the one exalted God, for by thy will all things are perfected."† The same author asserts that "God was prior to human nature."

In vain would any one endeavor to evade the force of our argument, by substituting nature in the place of God, as the principal and cause of this beautiful order. For either, by nature, he understands the particular frame and composition of every single thing; which would be saying nothing at all to the purpose in hand, because it is evident, that this manifold nature, which in most instances is quite void of reason, could never be the cause of that beautiful order and harmony which is everywhere conspicuous throughout the whole system: or, he means a universal and intelligent nature disposing and ordering everything to advantage. But this is only another name for God; of whom it may be said, in a sacred sense, that he, as an infinite nature and mind, pervades and fills all his works. Not as an informing form, according to the expression of the schools, and as the part of a compounded whole; which is the idlest fiction that can be imagined, for, at this rate, he must not only be a part of the vilest insects, but also of stocks and stones, and clods of earth; but a pure, unmixed nature, which orders and governs all things with the greatest freedom and wisdom, and supports them with unwearied and almighty power. In this acceptation, when you name nature, you mean God. Seneca's words are very apposite to this purpose. "Whithersoever you turn yourself, you see God meeting you; nothing excludes his presence; he fills all his works. Therefore, it is in vain for thee, most ungrateful of all men, to say thou art not indebted to God, but to Nature, because they are, in fact, the same. If thou hadst received anything from Seneca, and should say, thou owedst it to Annæus or Lucius, thou wouldst not thereby change thy creditor, but only his name, because, whether thou mentionest his name or his surname, his person is still the same."*

An evident and most natural consequence of this universal and necessary idea of a God, is, his unity. All who mention the term God, intend to convey by it the idea of the first, most exalted, necessarily existent, and infinitely perfect being; and it is plain, there can be but one being endued with all these perfections. Nay, even the polytheism that prevailed among the heathen nations was not carried so far, but that they acknowledged one God, by way of eminence, as supreme and absolutely above all the rest, whom they styled the greatest and best of Beings, and the Father of gods and men. From him all the rest had their being and all that they were, and from him, also, they had the title of gods, but still in a limited and subordinate sense. In confirmation of this, we meet with very many of the clearest testimonies with regard to the unity of God, in the works of all the heathen authors. That of Sophocles is very remarkable: "there is indeed," says he, "one God, and but one, who has made the heavens, and the wide extended earth, the blue surges of the sea, and the strength of the winds."†

As to the mystery of the sacred Trinity,

* O! immensa, opifex rerum sapientia! dextræ
Divitias artemque tuæ miremur in ævum.

† Ὁ πάντων πατὴρ ὁ νοῦς ὢν ζωὴ καὶ φῶς ἀπεκύησε ἀνθρωπον οὗ πρασθη ὡς ἰδιον τέκνον, Πάσης φύσεως κτίστης ὁ πήξας την γην καὶ οὐρανον κρεμάσας καὶ ἐκτάξας το γλυκὺ ὑδωρ ἐξ αυτοῦ τοῦ ἀκιανοῦ ὑπαρχειν, ὑμνῶμεν σὲ τό πᾶν, κατό ἑν, σοῦ γὰρ βουλουμενου παντα τελεῖται.

* Quocunque te flexeris, ibi Deum vides occurrentem tibi, nihil ab illo vacat; opes suum ipse implet: ergo nihil agis, ingratissime mortalium, qui te negas Deo debere, sed naturæ, quia eidem est utrumque officium. Si quid a Seneca accepisses, et Annæo te diceres debere vel Lucio, non creditorem mutares, sed nomen, quoniam sive nomen ejus dicas, sive prænomen, sive cognomen, idem tamen ipse est. SENECA, 4. de Benef.

† Εἷς ταῖς ἀληθειαισιν, εἷς ἐστὶν Θεός,
Ος οὐρανόν τ' ἔτευξε καὶγαῖαν μακράν
Πόντου τε χαρπὸν ὑδρα καὶ ανεμῶν βιας.

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which has a near and necessary connexion with the present subject, I always thought it was to be received and adored with the most humble faith, but by no means to be curiously searched into, or perplexed with the absurd questions of the schoolmen. We fell by an arrogant ambition after knowledge; by mere faith we rise again, and are reinstated. And this mystery, indeed, rather than any other, seems to be a tree of knowledge, prohibited to us while we sojourn in these mortal bodies. This most profound mystery, though obscurely represented by the shadows of the Old Testament, rather than clearly revealed, was not unknown to the most ancient and celebrated doctors among the Jews, nor altogether unattested, however obstinately later authors may maintain the contrary. Nay, learned men have observed, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are expressly acknowledged in the books of the cabalists, and they produce surprising things to this purpose out of the book of Zohar, which is ascribed to R. Simeon, Ben Joch, and some other cabalistical writers. Nay, the book just now mentioned, after saying a great deal concerning the Three in One essence, adds, "That this secret will not be revealed to all till the coming of the Messias."* I insist not upon what is said of the name consisting of twelve letters, and another larger one of forty-two, as containing a fuller explication of that most sacred name, which they call Hammephorash.†

Nor is it improbable, that some dawn, at least, of this mystery had reached even the heathen philosophers. There are some who think they can prove, by arguments of no inconsiderable weight, that Anaxagoras, by his νοῦς, or mind, meant nothing but the Son, or Wisdom that made the world. But the testimonies are clearer, which you find frequently among the Platonic philosophers, concerning the *Three subsisting from one*:‡ moreover, they all call the *self-existing Being*, the *creating word*, or, *the mind* and *the soul of the world*.‖ But the words of the Egyptian Hermes are very surprising: "The mind, which is God, together with his word, produced another creating-mind; nor do they differ from one another, for their union is life."§

But what we now insist upon is the plain and evident necessity of one Supreme, and therefore, of one Only Principle of all things, and the harmonious agreement of mankind in the belief of the absolute necessity of this same principle.

This is the God whom we admire, whom we worship, whom we entirely love, or, at least, whom we desire to love above all things; whom we can neither express in words, nor conceive in our thoughts; and the less we are capable of these things, so much the more necessary it is to adore him with the profoundest humility, and to love him with the greatest intentness and fervor

* Hoc arcanum non revelabitur unicuique, quousque venerit Messias.

† Maim. Mor. Nev., part. i., c. 16.

‡ Περὶ τριῶν ἐξ ἑνὸς ὑποστάντων.

‖ Τὸ ἀυτό, ὃν τον δημιουργον λογον, καὶ νοῦν, καὶ τὴν του κόσμου ψυχην.

§ Ὁ νοῦς Θεὸς ἅπασης λογῳ ετερου νοῦν δημιουργόν, ἀλλ' οὐ δύστανται ἀπ' ἀλληλῶν, ενωσις γὰρ τούτων ἐστὶν ἡ ζωή.

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## LECTURE VIII.

### THE WORSHIP OF GOD, PROVIDENCE, AND THE LAW GIVEN TO MAN.

THOUGH I thought it by no means proper to proceed without taking notice of the arguments that serve to confirm the first and leading truth of religion, and the general consent of mankind with regard to it; yet the end I chiefly proposed to myself, was to examine this consent, and point out its force, and the use to which it ought to be applied; to call off your minds from the numberless disputes about religion, to the contemplation of this universal agreement, as into a more quiet and peaceable country: and to show you, what I wish I could effectually convince you of, that there is more weight and force in this universal harmony and consent of mankind in a few of the great and universal principles, to confirm our minds in the sum and substance of religion, than the innumerable disputes that still subsist with regard to the other points, ought to have to discourage us in the exercise of true piety, or in the least to weaken our faith.

In consequence of this, it will be proper to lay before you the other propositions contained in this general consent of mankind, with regard to religion. Now, the first of these being, that there is one, and but one Eternal principle of all things; from this it will most naturally follow, that this Principle or Deity is to be honored with some worship; and from these two taken together, it must be, with the same necessity, concluded, that there is a providence, or, that God doth not despise or neglect the world which he has created, and mankind by whom he ought to be, and actually is worshipped, but governs them with the most watchful and perfect wisdom.

All mankind acknowledge, that some kind of worship is due to God, and that to perform it is by all means worthy of man; and upon the minds of all is strongly impressed that sentiment which Lactantius expressed with great perspicuity and brevity in these words, "To know God is wisdom, and to worship him, justice."*

In this worship some things are natural, and therefore of more general use among all nations, such as vows and prayers, hymns and praises; as also some bodily gestures, especially such as seem most proper to express

* Deum nosse, sapientia; colere, justitia

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everence and respect. All the rest, for the most part, actually consist of ceremonies, either of Divine institution or human invention. Of this sort are sacrifices, the use whereof in old times, very much prevailed in all nations, and still continues in the greater part of the world.

A Majesty so exalted, no doubt, deserves the highest honor, and the sublimest praises on his own account; but still if men were not persuaded that the testimonies of homage and respect they offer to God, were known to him, and accepted of him, even on this account all human piety would cool and presently disappear; and indeed, prayers and vows, whereby we implore the Divine assistance, and solicit blessings from above, offered to a God, who neither hears nor in the least regards them, would be an instance of the greatest folly; nor is it to be imagined, that all nations would ever have agreed in the extravagant custom of addressing themselves to gods that did not hear.

Supposing, therefore, any religion, or divine worship, it immediately follows therefrom, that there is also a providence. This was acknowledged of old, and is still acknowledged by the generality of all nations throughout the world, and the most famous philosophers. There were, indeed, particular men, and some whole sects that denied it. Others, who acknowledged a kind of Providence, confined it to the heavens, among whom was Aristotle, as appears from his book *De Mundo;* which notion is justly slighted by Nazianzen, who calls it "a mere limited Providence."* Others allowed it some place in things of this world, but only extended it to generals, in opposition to individuals. But others, with the greatest justice, acknowledged that all things, even the most minute and inconsiderable, were the objects of it. "He fills his own work, nor is he only over it, but also in it."† Moreover, if we ascribe to God the origin of this fabric and all things in it, it will be most absurd and inconsistent to deny him the preservation and government of it: for, if he does not preserve and govern his creatures, it must be either because he can not, or because he will not; but his infinite power and wisdom make it impossible to doubt of the former, and his infinite goodness, of the latter. The words of Epictetus are admirable: "There were five great men," said he, "of which number were Ulysses and Socrates, who said that they could not so much as move without the knowledge of God."‡ And in another place, "If I was a nightingale, I would act the part of a nightingale; if a swan, that of a swan; now that I am a reasonable creature, it is my duty to praise God."*

It would be needless to show, that so great a fabric could not stand without some being properly qualified to watch over it; that the unerring course of the stars is not the effect of blind fortune; that what chance sets on foot, is often put out of order, and soon falls to pieces; that, therefore, this unerring and regular velocity is owing to the influence of a fixed, eternal law. It is, to be sure, a very great miracle, merely to know so great a multitude, and such a vast variety of things, not only particular towns, but also provinces and kingdoms, even the whole earth, all the myriads of creatures that crawl upon the earth, and all their thoughts; in a word, at the same instant to hear and see all that happens† on both hemispheres of this globe: how much more wonderful must it be, to rule and govern all these at once, and, as it were, with one glance of the eye! When we consider this, may we not cry out with the poet, "O thou great Creator of heaven and earth, who governest the world with constant and unerring sway, who biddest time to flow throughout ages, and continuing unmoved thyself, givest motion to everything else," &c.‡

It is a great comfort, to have the faith of this Providence constantly impressed upon the mind, so as to have recourse to it in the midst of all confusions, whether public or private, and all calamities from without or from within; to be able to say—the great King, who is also my Father, is the supreme ruler of all these things, and with him all my interests are secure; to stand firm, with Moses, when no relief appears, and to look for the salvation of God from on high, and, finally in every distress, when all hope of human assistance is swallowed up in despair, to have the remarkable saying of the father of the faithful stamped upon the mind, and to silence all fears with these comfortable words, *God will provide.* In a word, there is nothing that can so effectually conform the heart of man, and his inmost thoughts, and consequently the whole tenor of his life, to the most perfect rule of religion and piety, as a firm belief and frequent meditation on this Divine Providence, which superintends and governs the world. He who is firmly persuaded, that an exalted God of infinite wisdom and purity is constantly present with him, and sees all that he thinks or acts, will, to be sure, have no occasion to overawe his mind with the imaginary presence of a Læli

* Μικρόλογον πρόνοιαν.

† Opus suum ipse, implet, nec solum præest, sed inest.

‡ Πεμπτοι δε ὧν ἦν καὶ οδυσσεύς, καὶ Σωκράτες, οἱ λεγοντες, ὅτι οὐδε σελήθω κινουμενος. ARRIAN., lib. i., cap. 12. Περι Θεῶον, &c.

* Εἰ μὲν ἀηδών ημεν, ἐποίουν τά τῆς ἀηδόνος, εἰ κύκνος τᾶ τοῦ κύκνου, νῦν δε λογικος εἶμι ὑμνεῖν με δει τον Θεόν. Ibid. cap. 16.

† Παντ' ἐφορᾶν, καὶ παντ' ἐπακούειν.

‡ O! qui perpetua mundum ratione gubernas
Terrarum cœlique sator, qui tempus ab ævo,
Ire jubes; stabilisque manens das cuncta moveri, &c.
BOETH, de Con. Philosoph. lib. iii., metr. 9.

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us or a Cato. Josephus assigns this as the source or root of Abel's purity: "In all his actions," says he, "he considered that God was present with him, and therefore made virtue his constant study."*

Moreover, the heathen nations acknowledge this superintendence of Divine Providence over human affairs in this very respect, and that it is exercised in observing the morals of mankind, and in distributing rewards and punishments. But this supposes some law or rule, either revealed from heaven or stamped upon the hearts of men, to be the measure and test of moral good and evil, that is, virtue and vice. Man, therefore, is not Ζῶον ἄνομον, a lawless creature, but capable of a law, and actually born under one, which he himself is also ready to own. "We are born in a kingdom," says the Rabbinical philosopher, "and to obey God is liberty."† But this doctrine, however perspicuous and clear in itself, seems to be a little obscured by one cloud, that is, the extraordinary success which bad men often meet with, and the misfortunes and calamities to which virtue is frequently exposed. The saying of Brutus, "O! wretched virtue, thou art regarded as nothing," &c.‡ is well known: as are also those elegant verses of the poet, containing a lively picture of the perplexity of a mind wavering and at a loss upon this subject: "My mind," says he, "has often been perplexed with difficulties and doubts, whether the gods regard the affairs of this earth, or whether there was no Providence at all. . . . . For, when I considered the order and disposition of the world, and the boundaries set to the sea —I thence concluded, that all things were secured by the providence of God. . . . . But when I saw the affairs of men involved in so much darkness and confusion," &c.‖

But not to insist upon a great many other considerations, which even the philosophy of the heathens suggested, in vindication of the doctrine of Providence; there is one consideration of great weight to be set in opposition to the whole of this prejudice, *viz.*, that it is an evidence of a rash and forward mind, to pass sentence upon things that are not yet perfect and brought to a final conclusion; which even the Roman stoic and the philosopher of Cheronea insist upon, at large, on this subject. If we will judge from events, let us put off the cause and delay sentence, till the whole series of these events come before us; and let us not pass sentence upon a successful tyrant while he is triumphant before our eyes, and while we are quite ignorant of the fate that may be awaiting himself or his son, or, at least, his more remote posterity. The ways of Divine justice are wonderful. "Punishment stalks silently, and with a slow pace; it will, however, at last overtake the wicked."* But after all, if we expect another scene of things to be exhibited, not here, but in the world to come, the whole dispute concerning the events of this short and precarious life, immediately disappears and comes to nothing. And to conclude, the consent of wise men, states, and nations, on this subject, though it is not quite unanimous and universal, is very great, and ought to have the greatest weight.

But all these maxims we have mentioned are more clearly taught, and more firmly established, in the Christian religion, which is of undoubted truth: it has also some doctrines peculiar to itself [Κυρίας δοξας], annexed to the former, and most closely connected with them, in which the whole Christian world, though by far too much divided with regard to other disputed articles, are unanimously agreed and firmly united together.

* Πάσιν τοῖς ὑπό δυτοῦ πραττομένοις παρεῖναιτον Θεον νομίζων, αρετῆς προνεῖτο. Antiq., lib. i., cap. 3.

† In regno nati sumus, Deo parere, libertas.

‡ Ο τλήμων αρετὴ ὡς οὐδὲν, &c.

‖ Sepe mihi dubiam traxit sententia mentem
Curarent superi terras, &c.
Nam cum dispositi quæsissem fœdera mundi
Præscriptosque maris fines—
——— hinc omnia rebar
Consilia firmata Dei, &c.
Sed cum res hominum tanta caligine volvi
Aspicerem, &c.——CLAUDIAN in Rufinum. lib. I.

* Σιγῇ καὶ βραδεῖ ποδὶ στειχουσα μάρψει τοὺς κακοὺς ὅταν τύχῃ.

† ——— Bene quam munita tenere
Edita doctrinâ sapientum templa serena.
LUCRETIUS

## LECTURE IX.

### THE PLEASURE AND UTILITY OF RELIGION.

THOUGH the author of the following passage was a great proficient in the mad philosophy of Epicurus, yet he had truth strongly on his side when he said, that "Nothing was more pleasant than to be stationed on the lofty temples, well defended and secured by the pure and peaceable doctrines of the wise philosophers."†

Now, can any doctrine be imagined more wise, more pure and peaceable, and more sacred, than that which flowed from the most perfect fountain of wisdom and purity, which was sent down from heaven to earth, that it might guide all its followers to that happy place whence it took its rise? It is, to be sure, the wisdom of mankind to know God, and their indispensable duty to worship him. Without this, men of the brightest parts and greatest learning seem to be born with excellent talents only to make themselves miserable; and, according to the expression of the wisest of kings, *He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow*, Eccles. i. 18. We must, therefore, first of all, consider this as a sure and settled point, that religion is the sole foundation of human peace and felicity. This, even the profane scoffers at religion are, in some sort, obliged to own, though much

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against their will, even while they are pointing their wit against it: for nothing is more commonly to be heard from them than that the whole doctrine of religion was invented by some wise men to encourage the practice of justice and virtue through the world. Surely, then, religion, whatever else may be said of it, must be a matter of the highest value, since it is found necessary to secure advantages of so very great importance. But, in the meantime, how unhappy is the case of integrity and virtue, if what they want to support them is merely fictitious, and they can not keep their ground but by means of a monstrous forgery! But far be it from us to entertain such an absurdity! For the first rule of righteousness can not be otherwise than right, nor is there anything more nearly allied or more friendly to virtue, than truth.

But religion is not only highly conducive to all the great advantages of human life, but is also, at the same time, most pleasant and delightful. Nay, if it is so useful, and absolutely necessary to the interests of virtue, it must, for this very reason, be also pleasant; unless one will call in question a maxim universally approved by all wise men, that "Life can not be agreeable without virtue;"* a maxim of such irrefragable and undoubted truth, that it was adopted even by Epicurus himself.

How great, therefore, must have been the madness of that noted Grecian philosopher, who, while he openly maintained the dignity and pleasantness of virtue, at the same time employed the whole force of his understanding to ruin and sap its foundations! For that this was his fixed purpose, Lucretius not only owns, but also boasts of it, and loads him with ill-advised praises for endeavoring, through the whole course of his philosophy, to free the minds of men from all the bonds and ties of religion. As if there was no possible way to make them happy and free without involving them in the guilt of sacrilege and atheism! As if to eradicate all sense of a Deity out of the mind, were the only way to free it from the heaviest chains and fetters! Though in reality this would be effectually robbing man of all his valuable jewels, of his golden crown and chain, all the riches, ornaments, and pleasures of his life: which is inculcated at large, and with great eloquence, by a greater and more divine master of wisdom, the royal author of the Proverbs, who, speaking of the precepts of religion, says, *They shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck:* and of religion, under the name of wisdom, *If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hidden treasure. Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding.* Prov. i. 9; ii. 4; xiii. 14; iv. 7.

And it is, indeed, very plain, that if it were possible entirely to dissolve all the bonds and ties of religion, yet that it should be so, would certainly be the interest of none but the worst and most abandoned part of mankind. All the good and wise, if the matter was freely left to their choice, would rather have the world governed by the Supreme and most perfect Being, mankind subjected to his just and righteous laws, and all the affairs of men superintended by his watchful providence, than that it should be otherwise. Nor do they believe the doctrines of religion with aversion or any sort of reluctancy, but embrace them with pleasure, and are excessively glad to find them true. So that, if it was possible to abolish them entirely, and any person, out of mere good will to them, should attempt to do it, they would look upon the favor as highly prejudicial to their interest, and think his good will more hurtful than the keenest hatred. Nor would any one in his wits choose to live in the world, at large, and without any sort of government, more than he would think it eligible to be put on board a ship without a helm or pilot, and in this condition to be tossed amid rocks and quicksands. On the other hand, can anything give greater consolation, or more substantial joy,* than to be firmly persuaded, not only that there is an infinitely good and wise Being, but also that this being preserves and continually governs the universe which himself has framed, and holds the reins of all things in his powerful hand; that he is our Father, that we and all our interests are his constant concern; and that after we have sojourned a short while here below, we shall be again taken into his immediate presence? Or can this wretched life be attended with any sort of satisfaction, if it is divested of this Divine faith, and bereaved of such a blessed hope?

Moreover, every one who thinks a generous fortitude and purity of mind preferable to the charms and muddy pleasures of the flesh, finds all the precepts of religion not only not grievous, but exceeding pleasant and extremely delightful. So that, upon the whole, the saying of Hermes is very consistent with the nature of things: "There is one, and but one good thing among men, and that is religion."† Even the vulgar could not bear the degenerate expression of the player, who called out upon the stage, "Money is the chief good among mankind."‡ But should any one say, "Religion is the principal good of mankind," no objection could be made against it; for without doubt, it is the only object the beauties whereof engage the love both of God and man.

But the principal things in religion, as I

* Οὐκ εἶναι ἡδέως ζῆν ἄνευ τῆς ἀρετῆς.

* Ἆρά τι τούτων χάρμα μεῖζον ἢν λαβοίς.

† Ἓν καὶ μόνον, ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἀγαθὸν ἡ εὐσέβεια.

‡ Pecunia magnum generis humani bonum.

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have frequently observed, are just conceptions of God. Now, concerning this Infinite Being, some things are known by the light of nature and reason, others only by the revelation which he hath been pleased to make of himself from heaven. That there is a God, is the distinct voice of every man, and of everything without him. How much more, then, shall we be confirmed in the belief of this truth, if we attentively view the whole creation, and the wonderful order and harmony that subsist between all the parts of the whole system! It is quite unnecessary to show that so great a fabric could never have been brought into being without an all-wise and powerful Creator; nor could it now subsist without the same Almighty Being to support and preserve it. "Let men, therefore, make this their constant study," says Lactantius, "even to know their common Parent and Lord, whose power can never be perfectly known, whose greatness can not be fathomed, nor his eternity comprehended."* When the mind of man, with its faculties, comes to be once intensely fixed upon him, all other objects disappearing, and being, as it were, removed quite out of sight, it is entirely at a stand and overpowered, nor can it possibly proceed further. But concerning the doctrine of this vast volume of the works of God, and that still brighter light which shines forth in the Scriptures, we shall speak more fully hereafter.

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## LECTURE X.

### THE DECREES OF GOD.

As the glory and brightness of the Divine Majesty is so great, that the strongest human eye can not bear the direct rays of it, he has exhibited himself to be viewed in the glass of those works which he created first, and, by his unwearied hand, continually supports and governs. Nor are we allowed to view his eternal counsels and purposes through any other medium than this. So that, in our catechisms, especially the shorter one, designed for the instruction of the ignorant, it might, perhaps, have been full as proper to have passed over the awful speculation concerning the Divine decrees, and to have proceeded directly to the consideration of the works of God; but the thoughts you find in it, on this subject, are few, sober, clear, and certain; and in explaining them, I think it most reasonable and most safe to confine ourselves within these limits, in any audience whatever, but especially in this congregation, consisting of youths, not to say, in a great measure, of boys. Seeing, therefore, the decrees of God are mentioned in our catechism, and it would not be proper to pass over in silence a matter of so great moment, I shall accordingly lay before you some few thoughts upon this arduous subject.

And here, if anywhere, we ought, according to the common saying, to reason but in few words. I should, indeed, think it very improper to do otherwise; for such theories ought to be cautiously touched, rather than be spun out to a great length. One thing we may confidently assert, that all those things which the great Creator produces in different periods of time, were perfectly known to him, and, as it were, present with him, from eternity; and that everything that happens, throughout the several ages of the world, proceeds in the same order and same precise manner as the Eternal Mind at first intended it should; that none of his counsels can be disappointed or rendered ineffectual, or in the least changed or altered by any event whatsoever. *Known to God are all his works*, says the apostle in the council of Jerusalem. Acts xv. 18. And the son of Sirach, *God sees from everlasting to everlasting, and nothing is wonderful in his sight.* Nothing is new or unexpected to him; nothing can come to pass that he has not foreseen. And his first thoughts are so wise, that they admit no second ones that can be supposed wiser. And this stability and immutability of the Divine decrees, is asserted even by the Roman philosopher: "It is necessary," says he, "that the same things be always pleasing to him, who can never be pleased but with what is best."*

Every artist, to be sure, as you also well know, works according to some pattern, which is the immediate object of his mind; and this pattern, in the all-wise Creator, must necessarily be entirely perfect, and every way complete. And if this is what Plato intended by his ideas (which, not a few, and these by no means unlearned, think very likely), his own scholar, the great Stagyrite, and your favorite philosopher, had, surely, no reason so often and so bitterly to inveigh against them. Be this as it may, all who acknowledge God to be the author of this wonderful fabric, and all these things in it, which succeed one another in their turns, can not possibly doubt that he has brought, and continues to bring them all about, according to that most perfect pattern subsisting in his eternal councils; and that these things that we call casual, are all unalterably fixed and determined to him. For according to that of the philosopher, "Where there is most wisdom, there is least chance,"† and therefore, surely, where there is infinite wisdom, there is nothing left to chance at all.

This maxim, concerning the eternal counsels of the supreme Sovereign of the world, besides that it everywhere shines clearly in

* Ut Parentum suum, Dominumque cognoscamus cujus nec virtus æstimari potest, nec magnitudo perspici, nec æternitas comprehendi.

* Necesse est illi eadem semper placere, cui nisi optima placere non possunt.

† Ubi plus est sapientiæ, ibi minus est casus

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the books of the sacred Scriptures, is also, in itself, so evident and consistent with reason, that we meet with it in almost all the works of the philosophers, and often, also, in those of the poets. Nor does it appear, that they mean anything else, at least, for the most part, by the term *fate;* though you may meet with some things in their works, which, I own, sound a little harsh, and can scarcely be sufficiently softened by any, even the most favorable interpretation.

But, whatever else may seem to be comprehended under the term *fate*, whether taken in the mathematicial or physical sense, as some are pleased to distinguish, it must at last of necessity be resolved into the appointment and good pleasure of the supreme Governor of the world. If even the blundering astrologers and fortune-tellers acknowledge, that the wise man has dominion over the stars; how much more evident is it, that all these things, and all their power and influence, are subject and subservient to the decrees of the all-wise God! Whence the saying of the Hebrews, "There is no planet to Israel."*

And according as all these things in the heavens above and the earth beneath, are daily regulated and directed by the Eternal King, in the same precise manner were they all from eternity ordered and disposed by him, who *worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will*, Eph. i. 11, who is more ancient than the sea and the mountains, or even the heavens themselves.

These things we are warranted, and it is safe, to believe. But what perverseness, or rather madness, is it, to endeavor to break into the sacred repositories of heaven, and pretend to accommodate those secrets of the Divine kingdom to the measures and methods of our weak capacities! To say the truth, I acknowledge that I am astonished and greatly at a loss, when I hear learned men, and professors of theology, talking presumptuously about the order of the Divine decrees, and when I read such things in their works. "Paul," says St. Chrysostom, "considering this awful subject as an immense sea, was astonished at it, and viewing the vast abyss, started back, and cried out with a loud voice, *Oh! the depth!*"† Nor is there much more sobriety or moderation in the many notions that are entertained, and the disputes that are commonly raised, about reconciling these Divine decrees with the liberty and free-will of man.

It is indeed true, that neither religion nor right reason will suffer the actions and designs of men, and consequently, even the very motions of the will, to be exempted from the empire of the counsel and good pleasure of God. Even the books of the heathens are filled with most express testimonies of the most absolute sovereignty of God, even with regard to these. The sentiments of Homer are well known;* and with him agrees the tragic poet, Euripides; "O! Jupiter," says he, "why are we wretched mortals called wise? For we depend entirely upon thee, and we do whatever thou intendest we should."†

And it would be easy to bring together a vast collection of such sayings, but these are sufficient for our present purpose.

They always seem to me to act a very ridiculous part, who contend, that the effect of the Divine decrees is absolutely irreconcilable with human liberty, because the natural and necessary liberty of a rational creature is, to act or choose from a rational motive, or spontaneously, and of purpose. But who sees not, that, on the supposition of the most absolute decree, this liberty is not taken away, but rather established and confirmed? For the decree is, that such a one shall make choice of, or do some particular thing, freely; and whoever pretends to deny, that whatever is done or chosen, whether good or indifferent, is so done or chosen, or, at least, may be so, espouses an absurdity. But, in a word, the great difficulty in all this dispute, is that with regard to the *origin of evil.* Some distinguish, and justly, the substance of the action, as you call it, or that which is physical in the action, from the morality of it. This is of some weight, but whether it takes away the whole difficulty, I will not pretend to say. Believe me, young gentleman, it is an abyss; it is an abyss never to be perfectly sounded by any plummet of human understanding. Should any one say, "I am not to be blamed, but Jove and fate,"‡ he will not get off so, but may be nonplused by turning his own wit against him. The servant of Zeno, the stoic philosopher, being caught in an act of theft, either with a design to ridicule his master's doctrine, or to avail himself of it in order to evade punishment, said, "It was my fate to be a thief." "And to be punished for it," said Zeno.‖ Wherefore, if you will take my advice, withdraw your minds from a curious search into this mystery, and turn them directly to the study of piety, and a due reverence to the awful majesty of God. Think and speak of God and his secrets with fear and trembling, but dispute very little about them; and, if you would not undo yourselves, beware of disputing with him. If you transgress in anything, blame yourselves: if you do any good, or repent of evil, offer thanksgiving to God. This is what I

* Non est planetam Israeli.

† Ὁ Παῦλος ὥσπερ πρὸς πέλαγος ἄπειρον ἰλιγγιάσας καὶ βαθὺς ἔδων ἀχανές, ἀπεπήδησεν εὐθέως καὶ μεγάλα ἀνεβόησεν, εἴπων, ὦ βαθὺς, &c.

* Τοῖος γὰρ νος εστιν, &c. CHRYS.

† Ὦ Ζεῦτι δῆτα τοὺς ταλαιπόρους,
Φρονεῖν λέγουσι, σου γὰρ ἐξηρτήμεθα,
Δρῶμεν, τε τοιαῦτ, ἁν σὺ τογχανης θέλων. IKET, 1, 734.

‡ Οὐκ ἐγώ αιτιος ἐιμί, αλλα ζεῦς καὶ μοῖρα.

‖ In fatis mihi, inquit, fuit furari. Et cædi, inquit Zeno.

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earnestly recommend to you; in this I acquiesce myself; and to this, when much tossed and distressed with doubt and difficulties, I had recourse, as to a safe harbor. If any of you think proper, he may apply to men of greater learning; but let him take care he meet not with such as have more forwardness and presumption.

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## LECTURE XI.

### THE CREATION OF THE WORLD.

WHOEVER looks upon this great system of the universe, of which he himself is but a very small part, with a little more than ordinary attention, unless his mind is become quite brutish within him, it will, of necessity, put him upon considering whence this beautiful frame of things proceeded, and what was its first original; or, in the words of the poet, "From what principles all the elements were formed, and how the various parts of the world at first came together."*

Now, as we have already observed in our dissertation concerning God, that the mind rises directly from the consideration of this visible world, to that of its invisible Creator: so, from the contemplation of the first and Infinite Mind, it descends to this visible fabric; and again, the contemplation of this latter determines it to return, with the greatest pleasure and satisfaction, to that eternal Fountain of goodness, and of everything that exists. Nor is this a vicious and faulty circle, but the constant course of a pious soul, travelling, as it were, backward and forward from earth to heaven, and from heaven to earth: a notion quite similar to that of the angels ascending and descending upon the ladder which Jacob saw in his vision. But this contemplation by all means requires a pure and divine temper of mind, according to the maxims of the philosopher: "He that would see God and goodness, must first be himself good, and like the Deity."† And those who have the eyes of their mind pure and bright, will sooner be able to read in those objects that are exposed to the outward eye, the great and evident characters of his eternal power and Godhead.

We shall, therefore, now advance some thoughts upon the creation, which was the first and most stupendous of all the Divine works; and the rather, that some of the philosophers, who were, to be sure, positive in asserting the being of a God, did not acknowledge him to be the Author or Creator of the world. As for us, according to that of the epistle to the Hebrews, ch. xi. 3, *By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.* Of this we have a distinct history in the first book of Moses and of the sacred Scriptures, which we receive as divine. And this same doctrine, the prophets and apostles, and, together with them, all the sacred writers, frequently repeat in their sermons and writings, as the great foundation of faith, and of all true religion. For which reason, it ought to be diligently inculcated upon the minds of all, even those of the most ignorant, as far as they are able to conceive and believe it; though, to be sure, it contains in it so many mysteries, that they are sufficient not only to exercise the most acute and learned understandings, but even far to exceed their capacities, and quite overpower them: which the Jewish doctors seem to have been so sensible, or, if I may use the expression, so over sensible, of, that they admitted not their disciples to look into the first three chapters of Genesis, till they arrived at the age required for entering on the priestly office.

Although the faith of this doctrine immediately depends upon the authority and testimony of the Supreme God of truth—for, as St. Ambrose expresses it, "To whom should I give greater credit concerning God than to God himself?"*—it is, however, so agreeable to reason, that if any one choose to enter into the dispute, he will find the strongest arguments presenting themselves in confirmation of the faith of it, but those on the opposite side, if any such there be that deserve the name, quite frivolous, and of no manner of force. Tatian declared, that no argument more effectually determined him to believe the Scriptures, and embrace the Christian faith, than "the consistent, intelligible account they gave of the creation of the universe."†

Let any one that pleases, choose what other opinion he will adopt upon this subject, or, as it is a matter of doubt and obscurity, any of the other hypotheses he thinks most feasible. Is he for the atoms of Epicurus, dancing at random in an empty space, and, after innumerable trials, throwing themselves at last into the beautiful fabric which we behold, and that merely by a kind of lucky hit, or fortunate throw of the dice, without any Amphion with his harp, to charm them by his music, and lead them into the building? To say the truth, the Greek philosopher had dreamed these things very prettily, or, according to more probable accounts, borrowed them from two other blundering philosophers, Democritus and Leucippus, though he used all possible art to conceal it, that he might have to himself the whole glory of this noble invention. But whoever first invented or published this hypothesis, how, pray, will he persuade us that things are actually so? By what convincing arguments will he prove them? Or what credi-

* ——————— Quibusque exordia primis
Omnia, et ipse tener mundi concreverit orbis.—VIRG., Ecl vi.

† Γενέσθω δε πρῶτον βουλῆς πᾶς καὶ καλος εἰ μέλλει θεασεσθαι θεὸντε καὶ καλον. PLOT.

* Cui enim magis de Deo, quam Deo credam?—AMBROSE.

† Τὸ ἀκατελήπτον τῆς τοῦ παντος ποιησεως. TATIAN

ble witnesses will he produce to attest his facts? For it would neither be modest nor decent for him nor his followers, to expect implicit faith in a matter truly philosophical and physical, and at the same time of so great importance; especially as it is their common method, smartly to ridicule and superciliously to despise the rest of mankind, as being, according to their opinion, too credulous in matters of religion. But what we have now said is more than enough upon an hypothesis so silly, monstrous, and inconsistent.

After leaving the Epicureans, there is no other noted shift that I know of, remaining for one that rejects the doctrine of creation, but only that fiction of the peripatetic school, concerning the eternity of the world. This Aristotle is said to have borrowed from a Pythagorean philosopher, named Ocellus Lucanus, who, in that instance, seems to have deserted not only the doctrine of his master, Pythagoras, but also that of all the more ancient philosophers. It is true, two or three others are named, Parmenio, Melissus, &c., who are suspected to have been of the same sentiments with Ocellus; but this is a matter of uncertainty, and therefore to be left undetermined. And, indeed, both Aristotle and Ocellus seem to have done this at random, or without proof, as they have advanced no arguments in favor of their new doctrine, that can be thought very favorable, much less cogent and convincing.

It is surely impossible to demonstrate the truth of their opinion *à priori;* nor did these authors attempt it. They only endeavored to muster up some difficulties against the production of the world in time, the great weakness whereof, any one who is but tolerably acquainted with the Christian religion, will easily perceive. Aristotle's arguments rather make against some notions espoused by the old philosophers, or rather forged by himself, than against the doctrine of the creation. Nay, he himself sometimes speaks with great diffidence of his own opinion on this subject, particularly in his topics, where, among other logical problems, he proposes this as one, *viz.*, "Whether the world existed from eternity or not."*

On the contrary, that the world has evident marks of novelty, is acknowledged by Lucretius in a remarkable passage of his poems, which is very well known. "Besides," says he, "if the earth and the heavens were not originally created, but existed from eternity, why did not earlier poets describe the remarkable actions of their times long before the Theban war and the destruction of Troy? But, in my opinion, the universe is not of old standing, the world is but of late establishment, and it is not long since it had its beginning." And more to that purpose.† But, besides this, if we duly consider the matter, and acknowledge the course of the stars not only to be owing to a first mover, but also, that the whole fabric, with all the creatures therein, derive their existence from some Supreme Mind, who is the only Fountain of Being; we must certainly conclude, that that self-existing Principle, or Source of all beings, is by all means eternal, but there is no necessity at all that we should suppose all other things to be coeval with it: nay, if it is not absolutely necessary, it is at least highly reasonable and consistent, to believe the contrary.

For, that this world, compounded of so many and such heterogeneous parts, should proceed, by way of natural and necessary emenation, from that One First, purest, and most simple Nature, nobody, I imagine, could believe, or in the least suspect. Can it possibly be thought that mortality should proceed from the Immortal, corruption from the Incorruptible, and, what ought never to be so much as mentioned, even worms, the vilest animalcules, and most abject insects, from the best, most exalted, and most blessed Majesty? But, if he produced all these things freely, merely out of his good pleasure, and with the facility that constantly attends almighty power, how much more consistent is it to believe, that this was done in time, than to imagine it was from eternity!

It is a very difficult matter to argue at all about that, the nature whereof our most enlarged thoughts can never comprehend. And though, among philosophers and divines, it is disputed whether such a production from eternity is possible or not, there is probably something concealed in the nature of the thing, though unknown to us, that might suggest a demonstration of the impossibility of this conceit. For, what is finite in bulk, power, and every other respect, seems scarcely capable of this infinity of duration: and divines generally place eternity among the incommunicable attributes of God, as they are called. It seems, to be sure, most agreeable to reason, and, for aught we know, it is absolutely necessary, that in all external productions by a free agent, the cause should be, even in time, prior to the effect; that is, that that there must have been some point of time wherein the being producing did, but the thing produced did not, exist. As to the eternal generation in which we believe, it is within God himself, nor does it constitute anything without him, or different from his nature and essence. Moreover, the external production of a created being, of a nature vastly different from the agent that is supposed to produce it, and to act freely in that production, implies, in its formal conception

* Πότερον ὁ κοσμος ἀιδιος, ἢ οὐ.

† Præterea si nulla fuit genitalis origo
Terræ et Cœli, semperque æterna fuere,
Cur supra bellum Thebanum et funera Trojæ,
Non alias alii quoque res cecinere Poetæ,
Verum, ût opinor, habet novitatem summa, recensque
Natura est mundi, neque pridem exordia cepit.

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(as the schools express it), a translation from nonentity into being; whence it seems necessarily to follow, that there must have been some point of time, wherein that created being did not exist.

The notions of the Platonists concerning pre-existent matter, do not concern the present subject; but, to be sure, they are as idle and empty as the imaginary eternity of the world in its present form. As angels were not produced out of matter, it is surely surprising, that those who assert their creation by God, should find difficulty in acknowledging the production of other things without pre-existent matter, or even of matter itself. The celebrated maxim of the philosophers, that *out of nothing, nothing is produced*, we receive, but in a different and sounder sense, *viz.*, that nothing can be produced but either from pre-existent matter, or by a productive power in which it was virtually contained. And, in this sense, this famous maxim affords an invincible demonstration *à posteriori* (for the subject is not capable of any other), to prove that there must be some being that existed before any creature, and the unity and eternity of that being.

The great Creator of the world, having all things virtually in himself, needed neither matter nor instruments in order to produce them. *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.* Psalm xxxiii. 6. These were his levers and tools, the word of the Lord, or that effectual act of his will which gave being to all things. "The mighty Lord of all, called directly to his holy, intelligent, and creating word, Let there be a sun, and a sun immediately appeared."* Here, *he spoke, and it was done.* "The word and the effect showed themselves together."† If you ask what moved infinite Goodness to perform this great work; I answer, that very Goodness you mention. For if, as they say, it is the nature of goodness to be always communicative, *that* Goodness, to be sure, must be the most diffusive, which is in itself greatest, richest, and so very immense, that it can not be in the least diminished, much less exhausted, by the greatest munificence. Here, there is no danger that that should happen, which Cicero prudently cautions against, in the case of human goodness, *viz.*, "That liberality should undo itself."‡ For that liberality must be immortal and endless, the treasures whereof are infinite.

Nor is it to be doubted, but from this very goodness, together with the immense power and wisdom which shine forth so brightly in the creation and all the creatures, an immense weight of glory is reflected upon the Creator himself, and the source of all these perfections. Nor must it be denied that the manifold wisdom of God proposed this end likewise. And there is nothing more certain than that, from all these taken together, his works, his benevolent and diffusive goodness, his power and wisdom illustrated in the creation, and the glory that continually results therefrom, from his wise counsels, and his own most perfect nature, whence all these things flow: nothing is more certain, I say, than that, from all these taken together, the Divine Majesty enjoys an eternal and inexpressible delight and satisfaction. And thus all things return to that vast and immense Ocean, whence they at first took their rise, according to the expression in the Proverbs, *He hath made all things for himself.* Proverbs xvi. 4. And the words of the song in the Revelations are most express to this purpose: *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created.* Rev. iv. 11. Nor could it, indeed, be otherwise, than that he who is the Beginning of all things, should also be the End of all; a wonderful Beginning without a beginning, and an End without an end. So that, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews reasons concerning the oath of God, *As he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself;* in like manner we may argue here, as he could propose no greater end or design, he proposed himself. It was the saying of Epicurus, that "the wise man does everything for his own sake:"* we, who are otherwise taught, should rather say, that the wise man does nothing for his own sake, but all for that of God. But the most exalted, to be sure, and the wisest of all beings, because he is so, must of necessity do all things for himself; yet, at the same time, all his dispensations toward his creatures are most bountiful and benevolent.

That the world was made directly and immediately for man, is the doctrine, not only of the stoics, but also of the master of the peripatetic school: "We are," says he, "in some respect, the end of all things."† And in another place, "Nature has made all these things for the sake of man."‡ Cicero speaks to the same purpose;‖ and Lactantius more fully than either.§ But Moses gives the greatest light on this subject, not only in his history of the creation, but also in Deuteronomy, wherein he warns the Israelites against the worshipping of angels, for this reason: because, says he, they were created for the service of man. And the sun, in Hebrew, is called Shemesh, which signifies a servant.

But O! whither do our hearts stray?—Ought we not to dwell upon this pleasant

* Ὁ δὲ πάντων κύριος ἐυθέως ὀφθέντος τῷ ἑαυτοῦ λογῳ καὶ νοητῳ καὶ δημιουργικῳ λογωΐσατο ἥλιο; καὶ ἅμα τὸ φάναι, &c.

† Ἅμα ἔπος, ἅμα ἔργον.

‡ Ne liberalitate pereat liberalitas.

* Sapientem omnia facere sui causa.

† Sumus enim et nos quadammodo omnium finis. 2 Phys., tit. 23.

‡ Natura hominum gratia omnia fecit.

‖ De Legibus.

§ Sol irrequietis cursibus et spatiis inequalibus orbes conficit, &c., ad finem capitis, De ira Dei. Cap. 13, 14.

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contemplation, and even die in it? I should choose to be quite lost in it, and to be rendered altogether insensible, and, as it were, dead to these earthly trifles that make a noise around us. O sweet reciprocation of mutual delights! *The Lord shall rejoice in his works*, says the psalmist; and presently after, *My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord.* Psalm civ. 31–34. Let us look sometimes to the heavens, sometimes to the sea and the earth, with the animals and plants that are therein, and very often to ourselves: and in all these, and in everything else, but in ourselves particularly, let us contemplate God, the common Father of all, and our most exalted Creator, and let our contemplation excite our love.

They who have sent the ignorant and unlearned to pictures and images, as books proper for their instruction, have not acted very wisely; nor has that expedient turned out happily or luckily for the advantage of that part of mankind. But surely, this great volume, or system, which is always open and exposed to the view of all, is admirably adapted to the instruction both of the vulgar and the wise; so that Chrysostom had good reason to call it "The great book for the learned and unlearned."* And the saying of St. Basil is very much to the purpose: "From the beauty of those things which are obvious to the eyes of all, we acknowledge that his inexpressible beauty excels that of all the creatures; and from the magnitude of those sensible bodies that surround us, we conclude the infinite and immense goodness of their Creator, whose plenitude of power exceeds all thought, as well as expression."†

For this very end, it evidently appears that all things were made, and we are the only visible beings that are capable of this contemplation. "The world," says St. Basil, "is a school, or seminary, very proper for the instruction of rational souls in the knowledge of God."‡ We have also the angels, those ministers of fire, to be spectators with us on this theatre. But will any of us venture to conjecture what they felt, and what admiration seized them, when they beheld those new kinds of creatures rising into being, and those unexpected scenes that were successively added to the preceding ones, on each of the six days of that first remarkable week, *when he laid the foundations of the earth, and placed the corner stone thereof; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.* Job. xxxviii. 6, 7.

But O, the stupidity of mankind! All those stupendous objects are daily around us; but, because they are constantly exposed to our view, they never affect our minds: so natural is it for us to admire new, rather than grand objects. Therefore, the vast multitude of stars which diversify the beauty of this immense body, does not call the people together; but when any change happens therein, the eyes of all are fixed upon the heavens. "Nobody looks at the sun, but when he is obscured; nobody observes the moon, but when she is eclipsed; then nature seems to be in danger; then vain superstition is alarmed, and every one is afraid for himself."*— "But surely," says St. Bernard, concerning the sun and moon, "these are great miracles, very great, to be sure; but the first production or creation of all things, is a vast miracle, and makes it easy to believe all the rest; so that, after it, nothing ought to excite our wonder."†

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## LECTURE XII.

### THE CREATION OF MAN.

This great theatre being built, beside those spectators who had been but lately placed in the higher seats, it pleased the supreme Creator and Lord to have another company below, as it were, in the area: these he called forth into being by creation, and a man was introduced into this area, to be a spectator of him and of his works, yet not a spectator only, but also to be the interpreter of them."‡ Nor yet was man placed therein merely to be a spectator and an interpreter; but also, in a great measure, to be possessor and lord thereof; or, as it were, the Creator's "substitute,"‖ in a spacious and convenient house, ready-built, and stored with all sorts of useful furniture.

Now, that man himself is a grand and noble piece of workmanship, appears even from this circumstance, that the most wise Operator, when he was going to create him, thought fit to preface his design with these words, *Let us make man.* So that he was created not merely by a word of command, like the rest of the creatures, but "by a consultation of the blessed Trinity."§

And, indeed, man is a wonderful composition, the conjunction of heaven and earth;

* Βιβλίον μέγιστον καὶ ἰδιώταις καὶ σόφοις.

† Ἐκ τοῦ κάλλους τῶν ὁρωμένων τὸν ὑπέρκαλον ἐννοήμεθα καὶ ἐκ τοῦ μεγέθους τῶν αἰσθητῶν τούτων καὶ περιγαιτῶν σωμάτων ἀναλογιζώμεθα ἄπειρον καὶ ὑπερμεγέθη καὶ πᾶσαν διάνοιαν ἐν τῷ πλήθει τῆς ἑαυτοῦ δυνάμεως ὑπερβαίνοντα.—Alex. hom. i.

‡ Ὁ κόσμος ψυχῶν λογικῶν διδασκαλίον καὶ τῆς θεογνωσίας παιδευτήριον.—Alex. hom. i.

* Sol spectatorem, nisi cum deficit, non habet; nemo observat lunam nisi laborantem; tunc orbes conclamant, tunc pro se quisque superstitione vana trepidat.—Seneca.

† Magna sunt hæc miracula, magna nimis ita est; miraculum autem immensum est ipsa prima omnium productio, seu creatio, quæ miraculorem omnium adeo facilem fidem, facit, ut post eam nihil sit mirum.

‡ Ὡς θέατρόν τε ἀνυτοῦ καὶ τῶν ἀνυτοῦ ἔργων καὶ οὐ μόνον θεατὴν αγγὰ καὶ ἐξηγήτην.—Arrian.

‖ Ὑποκατάστατον.

§ Faciamus hominem. Ut non solo jubentis sermone sicut reliquia, sed consilio sanctæ Trinitatis conditus sit.—Arnob.



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"the breath of God, and the dust of the ground;" the bond of union between the visible and the invisible world, and truly a "world in miniature, a kind of mixed world, nearly related to the other two."* Nor is he only a lively epitome and representation of the greater world, but also dignified with the image of his great Creator. He made the heavens and the earth, the sea and the stars, and then all sorts of living creatures; but, in the words of the poet, "A more divine creature, and more capable of elevated sentiments, was yet wanting, and one that could rule over the rest: therefore man was born."†

The rest of the creatures, according to the observation of the schoolmen, which is not amiss, had the impression of the Divine foot stamped upon them, but not the image of the Deity. These he created, and reviewing them, found them to be *good*, yet he did not rest in them; but upon the creation of man, the sabbath immediately followed. He made man, and then rested, having a creature capable of knowing that he was his Creator, one that could worship him, and celebrate his sabbath, whose sins, if he should commit any, he might forgive, and send, clothed with human nature, his only begotten Son, *in whom he is* absolutely *well pleased*, and over whom, as the person who fulfilled his good pleasure, he rejoices for ever, to redeem his favorite creature. By the production of man, the supreme Creator exhibited himself in the most admirable light, and at the same time, had a creature capable of admiring and loving him: and, as St. Ambrose observes, "One that was under obligation to love his Creator the more ardently, the more wonderfully he perceived himself to be made:"‡—"And man," says the same author, "was made a two-footed animal, that he might be, as it were, one of the inhabitants of the air, that he might aspire at high things, and fly with the wings of sublime thoughts."‖

And, indeed, the structure of man is an instance of wonderful art and ingenuity, whether you consider the symmetry of his whole fabric taken together, or all his parts and members separately. Gregory Nyssen speaks very much to the purpose, when he says, "The frame of man is awful and hard to be explained, and contains in it a lively representation of many of the hidden mysteries of God."§ How wonderful is even the structure of his body! which, after all, is but the earthen case of his soul; accordingly, it is in the Chaldaic language called *Nidne*, which signifies *a sheath*. How far does the workmanship exceed the materials! And how justly may we say, "What a glorious creature out of the meanest elements!" The psalmist's mind seems to have dwelt upon this meditation till he was quite lost in it: *How fearfully*, says he, *and wonderfully am I made!* Psalm cxxxix. 14. And that celebrated physician who studied nature with such unwearied application, in his book upon the structure of the human body, in which, after all, there is nothing divine, often expresses his admiration in these words, "Who is worthy to praise the wisdom and power of the Creator!"* and many other such exclamations. The Christian writers, however, are most full upon this subject, particularly St. Basil, St. Chrysostom, and others, who carry their observations so far as the nails and the hair, especially that on the eyelids. And Nyssen, on the words, *Let us make man*, has the following observation: "Man is a grand and noble creature. How can man be said to be any great matter, seeing he is a mortal creature, subject to a great many passions; from the time of his birth, to that of his old age, exposed to a vast many evils and distresses: and of whom it is written, *Lord, what is man, that thou shouldst be mindful of him?*"

"The history we have of the production of man, delivered me from this difficulty; for we are told that God took some of the dust of the earth, and out of it formed man: from these words I understood, that man was at once nothing, and yet something very grand."† He intended to say, that the materials out of which man was made were low, and as it were, nothing; but, if you consider the wonderful workmanship, how great was the honor conferred upon him! "The earth did not spontaneously produce man, as it did grasshoppers. God did not commit the production of this or that particular creature to his ministering powers; no, the gracious Creator took the earth in his own hand."‡ But besides the noble frame of his body, though it was made of the dust of the earth, that Divine breath, and, by means of it, the infusion of a precious soul, mixes heaven and earth together; not indeed in the common acceptation of that term, as if things so vastly different were promiscuously jumbled together, and the order of nature subverted; but only implying that the two parts

*Μικροκόσμος, μικτός τίς κόσμος, συγγενὴς τῶν ὅλο κόσμων.—Greg. Nyss.

† Sanctius his animal, mentisque; capacius altæ.
Deerat ad hoc, et quod dominari in cætera posset,
Natus homo est.—Ovid. 1 Met.

‡ Et quidem tanto ardentius amaret conditorem, quanto mirabilius se ab eo conditum intelligeret.

‖ Et factus est homo bipes, ut sit unus quasi de volatilibus, qui alta visu petat, et quodam remigio volitet sublimum cogitationum.

§ Ἡ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κατασκευὴ φοβερὰ τὶς καὶ δυσερμήνευτος καὶ πολλὰ καὶ ἀπόῤῥητα ἐν αὐτῇ μυστήρια θεοῦ ἐξεικονίζουσα.

* Τὶς ἱκανὸς ἐπὶ τὴν δημιουργοῦ σοφίαντε καὶ δύναμιν ἐπαινεῖν.

† Μέγα ἄνθρωπος καὶ τιμίον. Ἀλλὰ πῶς μεγὰ ὁ ἄνθρωπος· τὸ ἐπίκηρον ζωον τὸ μυρίοις πάθεσιν ὑποκείμενον, τὰ ἐκγονικῆς εἰς γῆρας μυρίων κακῶν ἐσμὸν ἐξαντλοῦν. Περὶ οὗ ἔλεγεν· Κύριε τίς ἐστιν ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ὅτι μιμνήσκῃ αὐτοῦ; &c. ἀλλὰ μοι τὴν τοιαύτην διαπόρησιν ἔλυσεν ἱστορία τῆς γεννήσεως τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀναγνωσθεῖσα, &c. Orat. ii.

‡ Οὐκ ἡ γῆ αὐτομάτως ὥσπερ, τοὺς τέττιγας ἐξέβασε, ἀλλ' οὐκ εἶπε τῶδε καὶ τῶδε ποιῆσαι λειτουργίαις δουλεύειν, ἀλλ ἰδιᾳ χειρὶ φιλοτεχνεῖ γῆν ἑλαβεν.

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of the human constitution are compounded with inexpressible art, and joined in a close union. As to the misery of the human race, and the contemptible figure in which the life of man appears, it is to be ascribed to another source, very different from the earthly materials out of which his body was made. That he was created happy, beautiful, and honorable, he owed to his great and good Creator; but he himself is the author of his own misery. And hence it is, that though, with regard to his original and pure nature, we ought, for the strongest reasons, to speak more honorably of him than of any other part of the visible world; yet, if we view him in his present circumstances, no part of the creation, to be sure, deserves to be lamented in more mournful strains.

But what words can express, what thoughts can comprehend, the dignity and powers of that heavenly soul that inhabits this earthly body, and the Divine image that is stamped upon it? The philosophers of all ages and nations have been inquiring into the nature of it, and have not yet found it out.

A great many have also amused themselves with too whimsical conjectures and fancies, and have endeavored to discover, by very different methods, a figure of the blessed Trinity in the faculties of the soul. Nor was Methodius satisfied with finding a representation of this mystery in the soul of every particular man, but also imagined he had discovered it in the first three persons of the human race, *viz.* Adam, Eve, and their first-born son; because in them he found *unbegotten*, *begotten*, and *proceeding*, as also *unity* of nature, and the *origination* of all mankind. But not to insist upon these, it is certain the rational, or intellectual, and immortal soul, so long as it retained its original purity, was adorned with the lively and refulgent image of the Father of Spirits, its eternal Creator: but afterward, when it became polluted and stained with sin, this image, though not immediately quite ruined, was, however, miserably obscured and defaced. It is true, the beautiful and erect frame of the human body, which gives it an advantage over all other creatures, and some other external graces that man possesses, may possibly be some reflected rays of the Divine excellence; but I should hardly call them the image of God. As St. Ambrose well observes, "How can flesh, which is but earth, be said to be made after the image of God, in whom there is no earth at all? And shall we be said to be like God, because we are of a higher rank than sheep and does?"*

The dominion over the rest of the creatures which man enjoys, is a kind of faint shadow of the absolute and unlimited sway of the supreme Majesty of heaven and earth. I dare not, however, venture to say, it is that image of which we are speaking; but, as those who draw the picture of a king, after laying down the lineaments of the face and body, use to add the purple robe and other ensigns of royalty, this dominion may certainly supply the place of these, with regard to this image of God on man. But the lively colors in which the image itself is drawn, are, says Nyssen, "purity, absence of evil, understanding, and speech."* For even the eternal Son and the wisdom of the Father seem to be intended by the philosophers under the term of The *Creating Mind*;† and by the divine apostle, John, he is called *The Word*. To these we have very good ground to add, charity, as nothing can be named that renders man liker to God;‡ for "God is love, and the fountain of it."‖ It is true, charity is a valuable disposition of the mind, but it also discovers itself in the frame of the human body; for man was made quite defenceless, having neither horns, claws, nor sting, but naked and harmless, and, as it were, entirely formed for meekness, peace, and charity.

The same author, speaking of the image of God on man, expresses himself as follows: "Wherefore, that you may be like God, exercise liberality and beneficence, study to be innocent, avoid every crime, subdue all the motions of sin—conquer all the beasts that are within you. What, you will say, have I beasts within me? Yes, you have beasts, and a vast number of them. And that you may not think I intend to insult you, is anger an inconsiderable beast, when it barks in your heart? What is deceit, when it lies hid in a cunning mind; is it not a fox? Is not the man who is furiously bent upon calumny, a scorpion? Is not the person who is eagerly set on resentment and revenge, a most venomous viper? What do you say of a covetous man; is he not a ravenous wolf? And is not the luxurious man, as the prophet expresseth it, a neighing horse? Nay, there is no wild beast but is found within us. And do you consider yourself as lord and prince of the wild beasts, because you command those that are without, though you never think of subduing or setting bounds to those that are within you? What advantage have you by your reason, which enables you to overcome lions, if, after all, you yourself are overcome by anger? To what purpose do you rule over the birds, and catch them with gins, if you yourself, with the inconstancy of a bird, are hurried hither and thither, and sometimes flying high, are ensnared by pride, sometimes brought down and caught by pleasure? But, as it is shameful for him who rules over nations to be a slave at home, and for the man who sits at the helm of the state to be meanly subjected to the beck of

* Caro terra esti qui dicatur ad imaginem Dei facta, cum in Deo terra non sit? et an eo Dei similes dicemur, quia damulis atque ovibus celsiores sumus?

* Καθαρότης κακου αλλοτριωσις, νους, και λογος.
† Δημιουργου.
‡ Θεοειδεστερον.
‖ Ἀγάπη ὁ Θεὸς, καὶ ἀγαπης πηγη.

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a contemptible harlot, or even of an imperious wife: will it not be, in like manner, disgraceful for you, who exercise dominion over the beasts that are without you, to be subject to a great many, and those of the worst sort, that roar and domineer in your distempered mind?"*

I shall, last of all, here subjoin what some of the ancients have observed, viz., that the nature of the human soul, as it lies hid out of sight, and is to us quite unknown, bears an evident resemblance to that of God, who is himself unsearchable, and past finding out.†

"But when we have well considered all these things, and the many other thoughts of this kind that may occur, may we not cry out, How surprising and shocking is the madness and folly of mankind; the far greater part whereof, as if they had quite forgot their original and native dignity, disparage themselves so far as to pursue the meanest objects, and shamefully plunge themselves in mud."

The words of Epictetus are divine, and have a wonderful savor of piety: "You go to the city of Olympia," says he, "to see some of the works of Phidias; but you have no ambition to convene, in order to understand and look at those works which may be seen without travelling at all. Will you never understand what you are, nor why you were brought into the world; nor, finally, what that is which you have now an opportunity to view and contemplate?"‡ And in another place, "For if we were wise, what have we else to do, both in public and in private, but to praise and celebrate the Deity, and to return our thanks to him? Ought we not, while we are digging, ploughing, and eating, to sing to God this hymn?—Great is the Lord, who has provided us with those necessaries of life."‖ &c.

As for you, young gentlemen, I would have you to be sensible of the honor and dignity of your original state; and to be deeply impressed with the indignity and disgrace of your nature, now fallen and vitiated. And dwell particularly upon the contemplation of it. Suffer not the great honor and dignity of the human race, which is to know the eternal and invisible God, to acknowledge him, love him, and worship him, to decay and die away within you. This, alas! is the way of the far greater part of the world; but do you live in continual remembrance of your original, and assert your claim to heaven, as being originally from it, and soon to return to it again.

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## LECTURE XIII.

### PROVIDENCE.

THE doctrines we have been handling, are the great supports of faith, piety, and the whole of religion: wherefore, it is most just, tha the zeal and care of the scholars should concur with that of their teachers, to have them well secured in the mind and affections; for, "a weak foundation," as the lawyers observe, "is the ruin of the work."* There are two principal pillars, and, as it were, the Jachin and Boaz of the living temples of God, which the apostle to the Hebrews lays down in these words: *He that cometh to God* (under which expression are comprehended every devout affection and every act of religious worship) *must believe that* God *is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* Heb. xi. 6.

That God *is*, implies not only that he is eternal and self-existent, but also, that he is, to all other beings, the spring and fountain of what they are, and what they have; and consequently, that he is the wise and powerful Creator of angels and men, and even of the whole universe. This is the first particular, that God *is*. The second, *that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, ascertains the *providence and government of God*, exemplified in its most eminent effect, with regard to mankind. For providence extends further than this, and comprehends in it a constant preservation and support of all things visible and invisible, whether in heaven or earth, and the sovereign government and disposal of them. Mechanics, when they have completed houses, ships, and other works they have been engaged in, leave them to take their fate in the world, and, for the most part, give themselves no further trouble about the accidents that may befall them. But the supreme Architect and wise Creator, never forsakes the work of his hands, but keeps his arms continually about it, to preserve it; sits at the helm to rule and govern it; is himself in every part of it, and fills the whole with his presence. So great a fabric could not possibly stand without some guardian and ruler: nor can this be any other than the Creator himself. For who can pay a greater regard to it, support it more effectually, or govern it with greater

* Θεῷ δοῦν μοιος ἔση διὰ τῆς χρηστότητος, διὰ τῆς ἀνεξικακίας, διὰ κοι, νωτίας, μισοπονηρός ὢν καὶ κατάκρατῶν τῶν πάθων τῶν ἐνδον, ἄρχε θερίων, τί οὖν ἱρεῖς, ἐγω θήρια ἔχω ἐν ἱμαντω; καὶ μυρία πολὺν ὄχλον ἐν σοὶ θηρίων ἔχεις, καὶ μὴ ὄβυυν νομισας εἰναί τὸ λεγόμενον. Πόσον θηρίον ἐστίν ὁ θύμος ὅταν ὄλακτῆ τῆ καρδια, &c.

† Κατ' εἰκδνα τυπικήν τοῦ ἀνωνυμου, καὶ ἀγνωριστοῦ Θεοῦ.

‡ Εις ὀλυμπίαν μεν ἀποδημεῖτέ, ἵν εἰδῆτε τὸ ἔργον τοῦ φειδιοῦ—ὅτου δε οὐδ ἀποδημῆσαι χρεία ἐστιν ταυτα δε θεάσασθαι καὶ κατανοῆσαι οὐκ ἐπιθυμέσετε οὐκ αἰσθήσασθε τοίνυν οὐτε τίνες, ἐστέ, οὐτέ ἐπί τί γεγόνατε, οὐτ' ἐπί τί τοῦτο ἐστίν ἐφ' ὁ τον θέαν παρειλήφατες. ARR. lib. i., cap. 6.

‖ Ἐι γαρ νοῦν ἔιχομεν, ἀλλὰ τί ἔδει ἡμᾶς ποιεῖν καὶ κοινῆ καὶ ἰδία ἡ ὑμνεὶν τὸ θεοῖν καὶ εὐφημεῖν καὶ ἐκεξέρχεσθαι τὰς χάριτας; οὐκ ἔδει καὶ σκάπτοντας καὶ ἀροῦντας καὶ ἐθοίοντας ἄδειν, μέγας ὁ θεος ὁτι ἡμῖν πάρεχειν ὄργανα ταυτα. EPICT. cap. 18.

* Debile enim fundamentum fallit opus.

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wisdom, than he who made it? "Nothing can be more perfect than God; therefore it is necessary the world should be governed by him," says Cicero. And "they who take away providence, though they acknowledge God in words, in fact deny him."*

If we believe that all things were produced out of nothing, the consequence is, that, by the same powerful Hand that created them, they must be preserved and supported, to keep them from falling back into their primitive nothingness. It must be also owned, that by the same powerful Hand, the regular motions of the stars, the contexture of the elementary world, the various kinds of creatures, and the uninterrupted succession of their generations, are continued and preserved. Nor is Divine providence to be confined within the heavens, or in the lower world, restrained to the care of generals in opposition to individuals; although the peripatetic school inclined too much to this opinion, and even the master of that school, Aristotle himself, in his often-quoted book, if it really be his, *De Mundo*. For that providence extends to all things in this lower globe, from the highest to the lowest, and comprehends within its sphere particular as well as general things, the least as well as the greatest, is confirmed not only by the doctrine of the sacred Scripture, but also by the testimony of all sound philosophy.

Therefore, in maintaining the doctrine of Providence, we affirm, 1st, That the Eternal Mind has an absolute and perfect knowledge of all things in general, and every single one in particular. Nor does he see only those that are actually present, as they appear in their order upon the stage of the world, but, at one view, comprehends all that are passed, as well as that are to come, as if they were actually present before him.† This, the ancient philosopher Thales is said to have asserted expressly, even with regard to the hidden motions and most secret thoughts of the human mind: for being asked, "If any one that does evil can conceal it from God?" he answered, "No, not even his evil thoughts."‡ "Nothing is left unprovided for," says St. Basil, "nothing is overlooked by God: his watchful eye sees all things; he is present everywhere to give salvation to all."‖ Epictetus has also the same divine thoughts upon this subject.§

And here, were any one to reflect seriously on the vast number of affairs that are constantly in agitation in one province, or even in one city, the many political schemes and projects, the multiplicity of law matters, the still greater number of family affairs, and all the particulars comprehended under so many general heads, he would be amazed and overpowered with the thoughts of a knowledge so incomprehensibly extensive. This was the very thought which excited the divine psalmist's admiration, and made him cry out with wonder and astonishment, *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I can not attain unto it.* Psalm cxxxix. 6.

2dly, He not only knows all things, and takes notice of them, but he also rules and governs them. *He hath done whatever he pleased in the heavens and the earth*, says the psalmist, Psalm cxxxv. 6. And *he worketh all things*, says the apostle, *according to the counsel of his own will.* Eph. i. 11. He does all things according to his pleasure, but that pleasure is influenced by his reason; all things absolutely, but yet all things with the greatest justice, sanctity, and prudence.

He views and governs the actions of man in a particular manner: he hath given him a law: he hath proposed rewards, annexed punishments to enforce it, and engage man's obedience. And having discovered, as it were, an extraordinary concern about him, when he made him (as we have observed upon the words *Let us make man*), in like manner, he still continues to maintain an uncommon good-will toward him, and, so to speak, an anxious concern about him. So that one of the ancients most justly called man "God's favorite creature." And he spoke much to the purpose, who said, "God is neither a lover of horses, nor of birds, but of mankind."* With regard to the justice of the supreme government of Providence, we meet with a great deal, even in the ancient poets.

"O father Jove," says Æschylus, "thou reignest in heaven, thou takest notice of the rash and wicked actions of gods and men. Thy care even extends to the wild beasts; thou observest the wrongs done them, and securest their privileges."†

"Though justice," says Euripides, "comes late, it still is justice: it lies hid, as it were, in ambush, till it finds an opportunity to inflict due punishment upon the wicked man."‡

"Dost thou think," says Æschylus, "to get the better of the divine knowledge, and that justice stands at a distance from the human race? She is near at hand, and sees without being seen; she knows who ought to be punished; but when she will sudden-

* Nihil Deo præstantius, ab eo igitur regi necesse est. Qui providentiam negant, vervis licet Deum ponunt, reipsa tollunt.

† Τατ' ἔοντα τατ' ἐσσόμενα προτ' ἔοντα.

‡ Ἐι Θεὸν τὶς λάθοι κακὸν τί πράσσων; ἀλλ οὐδὲ διανούμενος.

‖ Ὀυδὲν ἀπρονόητον, οὐδὲν ἠμελημενον παρὰ Θεῳ παυτα σκοπέυει ὁ ἀκοίμητος ὄφθαλ μος πᾶσί πάρει, σκορτιζων ἑκαστω την σωτάραιν.

§ Arr., lib. i., cap. 12.

* Ὁ Θεός Φίλιππος, οὐδε Φιλορνις ἀλλὰ φιλάνθρωπος.

† Ω Ζεῦ πάτερ, Ζεῦ, σόν μεν οὐρανοῦ κράτος,
Συ δ' ἐργ' επουρανίων καὶ ἀνθρώπων ὁρᾶς
Λεωργά κᾷθεμιστα. Σοι καὶ θηρίων
Ὑβρις τέ καὶ δίκη μελει.

‡ Δίκα τοτ δὶκα χρόνιος
Αλλ' ὅμως ὑποπεσοῦσ'
Ἐλάθεν οταν ἔχη
Τιν' ἀσεβῆ βροτῶν.

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ly fall upon the wicked, that thou knowest not."*

"The weight of justice," says the same author, in another place, "falls upon some quickly in the daytime, it lies in wait for some sins till the twilight; the longer it is delayed, the severer the punishment; accordingly, some are consigned to eternal night."†

There are two difficulties, however, on this head, which are not easily solved. 1st, The success that commonly attends the wicked in this world, and the evil to which the good are exposed. On this subject, even the philosophers, pleading the cause of God (which, if we take their word, they thought a matter of no great difficulty), advanced a great many things. Seneca tells us, "There is a settled friendship, nay, a near relation and similitude between God and good men: he is even their father; but, in their education he inures them to hardships. When, therefore, you see them struggling with difficulties, sweating, and employed in up-hill work; while the wicked, on the other hand, are in high spirits, and swim in pleasures; consider, that we are pleased with modesty in our children, and forwardness in our slaves; the former we keep under by severe discipline, while we encourage impudence in the latter. Be persuaded that God takes the same method. He does not pamper the good man with delicious fare, but tries him; he accustoms him to hardships, and (which is a wonderful expression in a heathen) PREPARES HIM FOR HIMSELF."‡ And in another place, "Those luxurious persons whom he seems to indulge and to spare, he reserves for evils to come. For you are mistaken, if you think any one excepted. The man who has been long spared, will at last have his portion of misery; and that he seems to have been dismissed, is only delayed for a time."‖ And a vast deal more to this purpose. The same sort of sentiments we meet with in Plutarch: "God takes the same method," says he, "with good men, that teachers do with their scholars, when they exact more than ordinary of those children of whom they have the greatest hopes."* And it is a noble thought which we meet with in the same author: "If he who transgresses in the morning," says he, "is punished in the evening, you will not say that, in this case, justice is slow; but to God, one, or even several ages, are but as one day."† How near is this to St. Peter's saying on the same subject! 2 Pet. iii. 8.

2dly, The other point upon this subject, which perplexes men fond of controversy, and is perplexed by them, is, how to reconcile human liberty with Divine providence, which we have taken notice of before. But to both these difficulties, and to all others that may occur upon the subject, I would oppose the saying of St. Augustine: "Let us grant that he can do some things which we can not understand."‡

What a melancholy thing it would be to live in a world where anarchy reigned! It would certainly be a woful situation to all; but more especially to the best and most inoffensive part of mankind. It would have been no great privilege, to have been born into a world without God and without providence. For, if there were no Supreme Ruler of the world, then, undoubtedly, the wickedness of men would reign without any curb or impediment, and the great and powerful would unavoidably devour the weak and helpless, "as the great fishes often eat up the small, and the hawk makes havoc among the weaker birds."‖

It may be objected, that this frequently happens, even in the present world, as appears from the prophecies of Habakkuk, ch. i. 15. But the prophet, immediately after, asserts, that there is a Supreme Power, which holds the reins in the midst of these irregularities; and though they are sometimes permitted, yet, there is a determinate time appointed for setting all things to rights again, which the just man expects, and, till it comes, *lives by faith*, Hab. ii. 3, 4. Some passages of Ariston's Iambics are admirable to this purpose.

"*A.* Be patient; for God uses to support worthy men, such as you are, in a remarkable manner. And unless those who act in a becoming manner, are to receive some great reward, to what purpose is it, pray, to cultivate piety any longer? *B.* I wish that may be the case; but I too often see those who conform themselves to the rules of piety and virtue, oppressed by calamity; while those

* Δοκεῖς τὰ θεῶν σὺ ξυνητὰ νικᾶσθαί ποτε
Καὶ τὴν δίκην ποῦ μακρὰ ἀποικεῖσθαι βροτῶν;
Ἡ δ' ἐγγυς ἐστιν οὐχ ὁρωμένη δ' ὁρᾷ
Ὁν χρὴ κολάζειν τ' ὄιδεν. Ἀλλ' ουκ οἶθα σὺ
Ὁπόταν ἄφνω μολοῦσα διολέση κακοὺς.

† Ροπὴ δ' ἐπισκοπεῖ δίκας
Ταχεῖα τοὺς μὲν ἐν φάει
Τὰ δ' ἐν μεταιχμίῳ σκότου
Μένει, χρονίζουτ' ἔχη βρόει
Τοὺς δ' κραντος ἔχει νὺξ.

‡ Inter bonus viros ac DEUM est amicitia, imo necessitudo, et similitudo, imo ille eorum pater, sed durius eos educat, cum itaque eos videris laborare, sudare, et ardum ascendere, malos autem lascivire, et voluptatibus fluere, cogita, filiorum nos modestia delectare, vernularum licentia: illos disciplina tristiori contineri, horum ali audaciam. Idem tibi de DEO liqueat, bonum virum deliciis non innutrit, experitur, indurat, et SIBI ILLUM PRÆPARAT.

‖ Eos autem quibus indulgere videtur, quibus parcere, molles venturis malis servat. Erratis enim si quem judicatis exceptum. Veniet ad illum diu felicem sua portio. Et qui videtur dimissus esse, delatus est. SEN. DE GUBERN. MUNDI.

* Hanc rationem Deus sequitur in bonis viris, quam in discipulis suis preceptores, qui plus laboris ab iis exigunt, in quibus certior spes est. PLUT. περί των βραδέως τιμωρουμένων.

† Si qui manc peccavit, vespere puniatur, tardum hoc non dices: at DEO seculum, vel etiam plura secula, pro die uno.

‡ Demus illum aliquod facere, et nos non posse intelligere-

‖ ——— Pisces ut sæpe minutos
Magna comest, et aves enecat accipiter.

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who mind nothing but what they are prompted to by private interest and profit, thrive and flourish much better than we. *A.* For the present it is so, indeed; but it becomes us to look a great way forward, and wait till the world has completed its full revolution. For it is by no means true, that this life is entirely under the dominion of blind chance, or fortune; though many entertain this wicked notion, and the corrupt part of mankind, from this consideration, encourage themselves in immorality; but the virtues of the good will meet with a proper reward, and the wicked will be punished for their crimes. For nothing happens without the will of heaven."*

What the poets sometimes advance concerning a supreme fate, which governs all things, they often ascribe to God; though now and then they forget themselves, and subject even the Supreme Being to their fate, as the stoic philosophers did also. But possibly they both had a sound meaning, though it was couched under words that sound a little harsh; and this meaning now and then breaks forth, particularly when they celebrate God for disposing all things, by an eternal law, according to his own good pleasure, and thereby make him the supreme and universal governor, subject to no other, but, in some respect, to himself, or to his decrees: which, if you understand them in a sound sense, is all that they can mean by their *το σοφώτατον* and their *το ἀμεταβλητον*. The same judgment is to be passed with regard to what we find said about fortune: for either that word signifies nothing at all, or you must understand by it, the Supreme Mind, freely disposing of all things. And this is very clearly attested by the following excellent verses of Menander: "Cease to improve your minds, for the mind of man is nothing at all. The government of all things is solely in the hands of fortune: whether this fortune be a mind, or the Spirit of God, or whatever else it is, it carries all before it. Human prudence is but a vapor, a mere trifle," *&c.*†

We have also a great many proofs, that, in the opinion of the old poets, fate and fortune were precisely the same; one instance whereof we meet with in the following passage: "Fortune and fate, Pericles, are the givers of all that man enjoys."‡

And, instead of the terms fate and fortune, they sometimes used the word necessity. But all these were but other names, though ill-chosen, for Providence. Euripides having said a great deal concerning fate or necessity at last resolves the whole into this: "Jupite. executes, with thee, all he had decreed before."§

And Homer's words are very remarkable: "Jupiter," says he, "increases or diminishes the valor of men, as he thinks proper: for he is the most powerful of all."† And in another place: "Jove from Olympus, distributes happiness to good and bad men in general, and every one in particular, as he himself thinks proper."‡

Let us, therefore, look upon God as our Father, and venture to trust him with our all Let us ask and beg of him what we want, and look for supplies from no other quarter. This, the indulgent father in Terence desired; and much more our heavenly Father. And surely everything is better conducted by a dutiful love and confidence, than by an ignoble and servile fear; and we are very injurious both to him and ourselves, when we think not, that all things, on his part, are managed with the greatest goodness and bounty. It is a true test of religion and obedience, when, with honorable thoughts, and a firm confidence in our Father, we absolutely depend upon him, and serve him from a principle of love. "Be not," says Augustine, "a froward boy, in the house of the best of fathers, loving him when he is fond of thee, and hating him when he gives thee chastisement, as if, in both cases, he did not intend to provide an inheritance for thee."§ If we suppose thi Providence to be the wisest and the best, i is necessary that in every instance our wills should be perfectly submissive to its designs; otherwise we prefer our own pleasure to the will of Heaven, which appears very unnatural. St. Augustine, on the expression *upright in heart*, which we frequently meet with in the psalms, makes an excellent observation: "If you cheerfully embrace," says he, "the Divine will in some things, but in others would rather prefer your own, you are crooked in heart, and would not have your crooked inclinations conformed to his upright intentions, but, on the contrary, would bend his upright will to yours."‖

* A. *θάρσει.* Βοηθεῖν πάσιν τοῖσιν ἀξιοῖς
Εἶωθεν ὁ θεος, &c.

† Παύεσθε νοῦν ἔχοντες, οὐδὲν γάρ πλέον
Ἀνθρώπινος νοῦς ἐστιν, αλλ' ὁ τῆς τύχης,
Εἴτ' ἐστι τοῦτο πνεῦμα θεῖον εἴτε νοῦς,
Τοῦτ' ἐστι παντὰ καὶ κυβερνῶν, καὶ στρεφον
Καὶ σῴζον, ἡ πρόνοια δ' ἡ θυητή, κἀκνός,
Καὶ φληναφας, &c.

‡ Πάντα τύχη καὶ μοῖρα, Περίκλεες ἄνδρι διδωσιν.

* Καὶ γάρ Ζεύσ, νευση
Συν σοι τουτο τελευτᾶ.—EURIP. IN ALCESTIDE.

† Ζευς δ' ἀρετην ἀνδρεσσιν ὀφέλλει τε μινύθει τε
Ὅππως κεν ἐθέλησιν ὁ γὰρ κάρτιστος ἁπάντων.
HOM. IL. XX.

‡ Ζευς δ' αντὸς νέμει ὅλβον Ὀλύμπιος ἀνθρώποισιν
Ἐσθλοῖς ἠδέ κακοῖσιν, ὅπως ἐθελησίν ἑκάστῳ.
HOM. ODYSS. IV.

§ Ne sis peur insulsus in domo optimi patris, amans patrem, si tibi blanditur, et odio habens, quando te flagellat; quasi non et blandiens, et flagellans hæreditatem paret.

‖ Si voluntatem divinam in quibusdam amplecteris, in aliis tuam malles, curvus es corde, et non vis curvam tuam voluntatem ad illius rectam dirigere, sed illus rectam vis ad tuam curvam incurvare.

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## LECTURE XIV.

### CHRIST THE SAVIOR.

It is acknowledged, that the publication of the gospel is exceeding agreeable, and perfectly answers its original name, which signifies *good tidings*. How much sweeter is this joyful news, than the most ravishing and delightful concerts of music! Nay, these are the best tidings that were ever heard in any age of the world. O happy shepherds, to whom this news was sent down from heaven! Ye, to be sure, though watching in the fields, exposed to the severe cold of the night, were, in this, more happy than kings that slept at their ease in gilded beds; that the wonderful nativity of the Supreme King, begotten from eternity, that nativity which brought salvation to the whole world, was first communicated to you, and just at the time it happened. *Behold*, says the angel, *I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day a Savior.* Luke ii. 10, 11. And immediately, a great company of the heavenly host joined the angel, and in your hearing sung, *Glory to God in the highest.* And indeed, then, in the strictest truth, "A most extraordinary child was sent down from the lofty heavens," &c.* Whence also, his name was sent down along with him: *His name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.* Matt. i. 21. "O sweet name of Jesus," says St. Bernard, "honey in the mouth, melody in the ears, and healing to the heart." This is the Savior, who, though we were so miserable, and so justly miserable, yet, would not suffer us to perish. Nor did he only put on our nature, but also our sins; that is in a legal sense, our guilt being transferred to him. Whence we not only read, that *the word was made flesh*, John i. 14, but also, that *he was made sin for us, who knew no sin:* 2 Cor. v. 12: and even, as we have it in the epistle to the Galatians, ch. iii. 13, that he was *made a curse*, that from him an eternal blessing and felicity might be derived to us. The spotless Lamb of God bore our sins, that were devolved upon him: by thus bearing them, he destroyed them; and by dying for them, gained a complete victory over death. And how wonderful is the gradation of the blessings he procured for us! He not only delivered us from a prison and death, but presents us with a kingdom: according to that of the psalmist, *Who redeemeth thee from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies.* Psalm ciii. 4.

I believe there are none so stupid or insensible, as to refuse that these tidings are very agreeable and pleasing to the ear. But we may, not without some reason, suspect of the greatest part of nominal Christians, who commonly receive these truths with great applause, that it may be said to them, without any injustice, what is all this to you? These privileges are truly great and manifold, and indifferently directed to all to whom they are preached, unless they reject them, and shut the door against happiness offering to come in: and this in not only the case of a great part of mankind, but they also impose upon themselves by false hopes, as if it were enough to hear of these great blessings, and dream themselves happy, because these sounds had reached their ears. But, O unhappy men! what will all these immense riches signify to you, I must indeed say, if you are not allowed to use them, but rather, if you know not how to avail yourselves of them? I therefore earnestly wish that these words of the gospel were well fixed in your minds: *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not; but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.* John i. 10–12. *In him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid*, Col. ii. 3; and without him, there is nothing but emptiness, because *in him all fulness doth dwell.* But what advantage can it be to us to hear these riches of our Jesus spoken of at great length, and to excellent purpose, or even to speak of them ourselves, if, all the while, we talk of them as a good foreign to us, and in which we have no concern, because our hearts are not yet open to receive him? What, pray, would the most accurate description of the Fortunate islands, as they called, or all the wealth of the Indies and the New World, with all its golden mines, signify to a poor man half naked, struggling with all the rigors of cold and hunger? Should one, in these circumstances, I say, hear or read of these immense treasures, or should any one describe them to him in the most striking manner, either by word of mouth, or with the advantage of an accurate pen; can it be doubted, but this empty display of riches, this phantom of wealth and affluence, would make his sense of want and misery the more intolerable? Unless it be supposed, that despair had already reduced him to a state of insensibility. What further enhances the misery of those who hear of this treasure, and think of it to no purpose, is this, that there is no one of them, who is not miserable by choice, and a beggar in the midst of the greatest wealth; and not only miserable by choice, but obstinately so, from an invincible and distracted fondness for the immediate causes of his misery. "For who but a downright madman would reject such golden offers?"*

To give a brief and plain state of the case: to those who sincerely and with all their hearts receive him, Christ is *all things;* to those who receive him not, *nothing.* For, how can any good, however suitable or extensive, be actually enjoyed, or indeed any such enjoyment conceived, without some kind

* Jam nova progenies cœlo demittitur alto, &c. Virg. Ecl.

* Quis enim nisi mentis inops oblatum noc respuat aurum?

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of union, between that good and the person supposed to stand in need of it? *Behold* says, the psalmist, *all those that are far from thee shall perish.* Psalm lxxiii. 27. To be united to God, is the great and the only good of mankind. And the only means of this union, is Jesus. In whatever sense you take it, he ought truly to be called the *union of unions;* who, that he might with the greater consistency, and the more closely, unite our souls to God, did not disdain to unite himself to a human body.

The great business of our life, therefore, young gentlemen, is this acceptance of Christ, and this inseparable union with him, which we are now recommending. Thrice happy, and more than thrice happy, are they who are joined with him in this undivided union, which no complaints, nor even the day of death, can dissolve. Nay, the last day is happy above all other days, for this very reason, that it fully and finally completes this union, and is so far from dissolving it, that it renders it absolutely perfect and everlasting.

But, that it may be coeval with eternity, and last for ever, it is absolutely necessary that this union should have its beginning in this short and fleeting life. And pray, what hinders those of us that have not entered into this union before, to enter into it without delay? seeing the bountiful Jesus not only rejects none that come unto him, but also offers himself to all that do not wilfully reject him, and standing at the door, earnestly beg to be admitted. Oh, why do not these *everlasting doors open, that the King of glory may enter,* and reign within us? Nay, though he were to be sought in a far country, and with great labor, why should we delay, and what unhappy chains detain us? Why do we not, after shaking them all off, and even ourselves, go as it were out of ourselves, and seek him incessantly till we find him? Then, rejoicing over him, say with the heavenly Spouse, *I held him, and would not let him go;* and further add, with the same Spouse, that blessed expression, *My beloved is mine, and I am his.* And, indeed, this interest is always reciprocal. No man truly receives Jesus, who does not at the same time deliver up himself wholly to him. Among all the advantages we pursue, there is nothing comparable to this exchange. Our gain is immense from both; not only from the acceptance of him, but also from surrendering ourselves to him. So long as this is delayed, we are the most abject slaves. When one has delivered himself up to Christ, then, and then only, he is truly free, and becomes master of himself. Why should we wander about to no purpose? To him let us turn our eyes, on him fix our thoughts, that he who is ours by the donation of the Father, and his own free gift, may be ours by a cheerful and joyous acceptance. As St. Bernard says in those words of the prophet, *To us a child is born, to us a son is given:* Let us therefore make use of what is ours, for our own advantage."* So, then, let him be ours by *possession* and *use,*† and let us be his for ever, never forgetting how dearly he has bought us.



## LECTURE XV.

### REGENERATION.

The Platonists divide the world into two, the sensible and the intellectual world: they imagine the one to be the type of the other, and that sensible and spiritual things are stamped, as it were, with the same stamp or seal. These sentiments are not unlike the notions which the masters of the cabalistical doctrine among the Jews, held concerning God's *sephiroth* and seal, wherewith, according to them, all the worlds, and everything in them, are stamped or sealed. And these are probably near akin to what Lord Bacon of Verulam calls, his *parallela signacula,* and *symbolizantes schematismi.* According to this hypothesis, these parables and metaphors, which are often taken from natural things to illustrate such as are Divine, will not be similitudes taken entirely at pleasure, but are often, in a great measure, founded in nature and the things themselves. Be this as it may, that great change which happens in the souls of men by a real and effectual conversion to God, is illustrated in the Holy Scriptures by several remarkable changes, both natural and civil, particularly by *a deliverance from chains, prison, and slavery;* by *a transition from one kingdom to another;* and *from darkness to light;* by *a restoration from death to life;* by *a new creation;* by *a marriage;* and by *adoption,* and *regeneration.* Concerning this great change, as it is represented under the last of these figures, we propose, with Divine assistance, to offer a few thoughts from those words of St. John's gospel which we have already mentioned: *To as many as received him, to them gave he power* (or the privilege) *to become the sons of God.* John i. 12. Together with these words of our Savior, in another place of the same gospel: *Except a man be born again, of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God.* John iii. 3.

If, indeed, we consider the nature and the original of man, it is not without reason that he is called the *son of God,* according to that passage which the apostle, in his short, but most weighty sermon to the Athenians, quotes from the poet Aratus, and at the same time approves of, *For we are all his offspring.*‡ Acts xvii. 28. Our first parent, in St. Luke's gospel, is also expressly called *the son of God;* Luke iii. *ult.,* not only because he was

* Puer natus est nobis, filius nobis datus est; utamur, inquit, nostro utilitatem nostram.

† Κτησει και χρησει.

‡ Του γαρ και γενος εσμεν.

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created immediately by God, without any earthly father, but also on account of the Divine image that was originally impressed upon the human nature.

And this glorious title, which distinguishes him from all other corporeal beings, he has in common with the angels, who are also so called in several places in the book of Job. Job i. 6; xxxviii. 7. It is indeed true, to use the words of St. Basil, that "every piece of workmanship bears some mark or character of the workman who made it."* For I should rather choose, in this case, to use the word *mark*, or *character*, than *likeness*. But of man alone it is said, *Let us make him after our own image*. And this distinction is not improperly expressed by the schoolmen, who say, as we have already observed, that all the other works of God are stamped with the print of his foot, but only man, of all the visible creation, honored with the image or likeness of his face. And indeed, on account of this image or resemblance it is that he is in dignity very nearly equal to the angels, though made inferior to them. Here it is to be observed that this inferiority is but little, *Who was made*, saith the apostle, *a little lower than the angels*. Heb. ii. 9. So that, with regard to his body, he is nearly related to the brute creatures, and only a little superior to them with regard to temperament and the beautiful elegance of his frame, but made out of the very same materials, the same moist and soft clay, taken from the bosom of their great and common mother; whereas, to use the words of the poet, "The soul is the breath of God, which takes its rise from heaven, and is closely united to his earthly body, like a light shut up in a dark cavern."†

That Divine part of the human composition derives its original from the Father of Spirits, in the same manner with those ministers of fire, who are not confined to corporeal vehicles; concerning whom, the oracle, having acknowledged one Supreme Divine Majesty, immediately subjoins, "And we angels are but a small part of God."‡

And with regard to this principle which excels in man, which actually constitutes the man, and on account of which he most truly deserves that name, he is a noble and divine animal. And whatever some fanciful and proud men may boast concerning their families, "If we consider our originals, and that God was the author of the human kind, none of Adam's race can be called ignoble."‖

But if, on the other hand, we regard our woful fall, which was the consequence of sin, we are all degenerate; we have all fallen from the highest honor into the greatest disgrace, and the deepest gulf of all sorts of misery; we have given away our liberty and greatest dignity, in exchange for the most shameful and most deplorable bondage; instead of the *sons of God*, we are become the slaves of Satan: and if we now want to know to what family we belong, the apostle will tell us that we are *children of wrath*, and *sons of disobedience*.* Eph. ii. 2, 3.

But, as the overflowing Fountain of goodness and bounty did not choose that so noble a monument of his wisdom should be entirely ruined by this dismal fall, could any one be more proper to raise it up again, or better qualified to restore men to the dignity of the sons of God, than his own eternal Son, who is the most perfect and express image of the Father? Nor does this glorious person decline the severe service. Though he was the son of his Father's love, the heir and Lord of the whole universe; though he might be called the delight of his most exalted Father, and of all blessed spirits, and now, with the greatest justice, the darling of the human kind; yet he left his Father's bosom, and, O wonderful condescension! became the son of man, that men might anew become the sons of God. Whence he is also called *The second Adam*, because he recovered all that was lost by the first.

That all who sincerely receive him, might be again admitted into the embraces of the Father, and no more be called *children of wrath*, he himself submitted to the punishment due to our disobedience; and by bearing it, removed our guilt, and pacified justice. He also went into the flames of Divine wrath, to deliver us from them; and by a plentiful stream of his most precious blood, quite extinguished them. He likewise took effectual care that those who were no longer to be called *children of wrath*, should also cease to be *children of disobedience*, by pouring out upon them a plentiful effusion of his sanctifying Spirit; that their hearts being thereby purged from all impure affections and the love of earthly things, they might, under the influence of the same good Spirit, cheerfully lead a life of sincere and universal obedience. Now, it can not be doubted that those who are so actuated and conducted by the Divine Spirit, are truly the *sons of God*; whence that spirit whereby they call *God their Father*, and with confidence apply to him as such, is called *the Spirit of adoption*.

Moreover, this wonderful restoration is often called *adoption*, not only to distinguish it from the natural and incomparable dignity which belongs to the only begotten Son, but also because we by no means derive this privilege from nature, but absolutely from the free donation of the Father, through the mediation of his only Son. We must not, however, conclude from this, that this privilege

* Πᾶν τὸ ἐργαζόμενον ἔχειν τινὰ τοῦ τέκτονος τύπον.

† Ψυχὴ δ' ἐστὶν ἄημα Θεοῦ καὶ μίξιν ἀνετλη
Οὐρανίη χθονίοιο, φάος σκηλυγγι κάλυφθεν.
NAZ. DE ANIMA.

‡ Μικρὴ δὲ Θεοῦ μερὶς ἄγγελοι ἡμεῖς.

‖ Si primordia nostra,
Anthoremque Deum spectes,
Nullus degener extat.—BOETH. DE CONS. PHIL., lib. iii., met. 6.

* Υἱοὶ ἀπειθείας καὶ τέκνα ὀργῆς.

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has nothing more in it than an honorable title, or, as they call it, an external relation. For it is not only inseparably connected with a real and internal change, but with a remarkable *renovation*, and, as it were, a *transformation* of all the faculties of the soul, nay, even of the whole man. You will accordingly find these words applied to this purpose, by the Apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, ch. xii. 2. And, to conclude, it is with a view to convince us, that, together with the title of sons, the Spirit of God is given to believers, and they are inwardly renewed thereby, that we so often in Scripture meet with this *regeneration* which is the subject of our present discourse.

If we consider the lives of men, we shall be apt to imagine that the generality of mankind who live in the world under the name of Christians, think it sufficient for them to be called by this name, and dream of nothing further. The common sort of mankind hear with pleasure and delight of remission of sins, imputed righteousness, of the dignity of the sons of God, and the eternal inheritance annexed to that dignity; but when they are told that repentance, a new heart, and a new life, contempt of the world and the pleasures of the flesh, fasting and prayer, are absolutely necessary for a Christian, *These are hard sayings, who can bear them?* Though at the same time it must be said, that they who do not regard these necessary duties, will have no share in the reward annexed to them.

There are many things which distinguish this Divine adoption from that which obtains among men. 1st, The former is not an expedient to supply the want of children, which is commonly the case among men; for God has his only begotten Son, who is incomparably preferable to all the rest taken together; who is immortal as his Father; and though, from a principle of wonderful humility, he condescended to become mortal, and even to die, yet he rose again from the dead, and liveth for ever. From him is derived all that felicity which our heavenly Father is pleased to confer upon us, out of his mere grace and bounty, through the merits and mediation of his dear Son. And is there any one on whom this felicity is bestowed, who will not freely acknowledge himself to be quite unworthy of so great an honor? Yet, such honor has the eternal and incomprehensible love of God condescended to bestow on us, who are quite unworthy and undeserving. And in this also the Divine adoption differs from that which is customary among men, who generally choose the most deserving they can meet with: but all those whom God maketh choice of, are unworthy, and some even are remarkably so.

2dly, Men generally adopt but one apiece, or, at most, a few; but Divine adoption admits into the heavenly family a most numerous host, extending even unto myriads, that Jesus, who is at the head of the family, *may be the first-born among many brethren.* Romans viii. 29.

And 3dly, They are all *heirs.* Whence i is said, in another place, *That he might bring many sons unto glory.* Heb. ii. 10. Nor is the inheritance of any individual in the least diminished in consequence of so vast a multitude of heirs; for it is an *inheritance in light*, and every one has the whole of it. Nor do the children come into the possession of this inheritance by the death of the Father, but every one when he dies himself; for the Father is immortal, and, according to the apostle, *the only one that has immortality;* that is, in an absolute, primary, and independent sense. Nay, he himself is the eternal inheritance of his sons, and death alone brings them into his presence, and admits them into the full enjoyment of him.

4thly (which I would have particularly observed), This Divine adoption is not a matter of mere external honor, nor simply the bestowing of riches and an inheritance; but is always attended with a real internal change of the man himself to a being quite different from what he was before (which is also recorded in sacred Scripture, concerning Saul, when he was anointed king); but this, human adoption can by no means perform. This last, in the choice of a proper object, justly pays regard to merit. For though the richest and even the best of men, may clothe richly the person whom he has thought proper to adopt, and get him instructed in the best principles and rules of conduct, yet, he can not effectually divest him of his innate dispositions, or those manners that have become natural by custom; he can not form his mind to noble actions, nor plant within him the principles of fortitude and virtue. But He who formed the heart of man, can reform it at his pleasure; and this he actually does: whenever he admits a person into his royal family, he, at the same time, endows him with royal and divine dispositions. And therefore, if he honors any person with his love, that person thereby becomes deserving; because, if he was not so before, he makes him so: he stamps his own image upon him in true and lively colors; and, as he is holy himself, he makes him holy likewise. Hence, it is, that this heavenly adoption is no less properly, truly, or frequently, in the sacred Scriptures, called *regeneration.* [Παλιγγενεσια.] And though a Jew, and a celebrated doctor of the Jewish law, excepted against this doctrine, when it was proposed to him under this name; yet, neither all of that nation, nor even the Gentile philosophers, were quite unacquainted with it. Rabbi Israel calls proselytes, *new-born Jews.* And those passages which we frequently meet with, concerning the *seed of Abraham*, and, in the prophets concerning the numerous converts that were to be made to the church, are, by their Rabbins, and the Chaldee paraphrase, applied

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to this spiritual generation, which they believed would remarkably take place in the days of the Messiah; particularly those two passages in the Psalms, in one whereof the spiritual sons of the church are compared to the drops of the *morning dew*, Psalm xlv. 16; cx. 3; not only on account of its celestial purity, but also with regard to the vast multitude of them. Some of these doctors also observe, that the number of proselytes would be so great in the days of the Messiah, that the church, omitting the ceremony of circumcision, would receive them into its bosom, and initiate them by ablution or baptism. Concerning this renovation of the mind, Philo Judæus says expressly, "God, who is unbegotten himself, and begets all things, sows this seed, as it were, with his own hand," &c.* Hierocles, and other Pythagorean philosophers, treat also of this moral or mystical regeneration; and under this very name, Plutarch also makes mention of it, and defines it to be "the mortification of irrational and irregular appetites." And Seneca's words relative to this subject are: "The families of the arts and sciences are the most noble; choose into which of them you will be adopted, for by this means we may be born according to our own choice; nor will you be adopted into the name only, but also into the goods of the family."†

Is not, also, the common custom that prevailed among the ancients, of honoring their heroes, and those men who were remarkable for exalted virtue, with the title of *sons of God*, a plain allusion to this adoption we have under our consideration? And what we have observed on the philosophers, who acknowledged this moral or metaphorical regeneration, is so very true, that it gave a handle to the fictions of those ancient heretics who evaded the whole doctrine and faith of the last resurrection, by putting this figurative sense upon it. As to what the Roman philosopher observes, that we may be born in this manner at our own pleasure or discretion, though to be sure it is not without our consent, yet, it does not altogether, nor principally depend upon us. Our sacred and apostolic doctrine presents us with much more just and pure notions on this subject when it teaches us, that, *Of his own will he begat us by the word of truth.* James i. 18. This is also represented in express terms in those words of the gospel which immediately follow the passage we mentioned at the beginning of this discourse. *Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* John i. 13. And, with great propriety, there is immediately added, another *generation* still more wonderful and mysterious, which is the principal and source of this renovation of ours: *The word was made flesh.* For, to this end, God was pleased to clothe himself with our flesh, that he might put his Spirit within us, whereby we, though carnal in consequence of the corruption of our nature, might be born again into a new, spiritual, and Divine life. The Holy Ghost, by overshadowing the blessed Virgin, was, in a very particular manner, the author of the human nature of the Son of God; and to the virtue and Divine power of the same Spirit, all the adopted children of the Deity owe their new birth. And as creation goes sometimes under the name of generation (for instance, in the words of Moses, Deut. xxxii. 18), *Of the Rock that begot thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten the God that formed thee:* that book also of the Bible, which, from the first word of it, is called *Bereshith*, is by the Greeks named *Genesis*, and in the oldest copy of the Septuagint, *The generation of the world;* and, in the beginning of it, Moses, speaking of the creation of the world, says, *These are the generations of the heaven and the earth.* (Gen. ii. 4.) So on the other hand, this spiritual generation is called creation, and with an additional epithet, *the new creation.* It has also, for its author, the same powerful Spirit of God, who of old sat upon the face of the waters as a bird upon its young, or as St. Basil renders it, *hatched:* so, also, in conversion the same Spirit rests upon our uninformed minds, that are lifeless, unprepared, and nothing at all but emptiness and obscurity, and out of this darkness brings forth light, which was the first and most beautiful ornament of the universe. To which the apostle also alludes in his second epistle to the Corinthians, ch. iv. 6. The resurrection of the dead, is also the peculiar work of this living Spirit of God; and to him the apostle Peter expressly ascribes the resurrection of Christ: *For Christ also*, says he, *hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.* 1 Peter iii. 18. And here, again, there is a mutual exchange of names; for, in the gospel according to Matthew, the resurrection of the dead is called the regeneration: *Verily, I say unto you*, says our Lord, *that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye shall also sit upon twelve thrones.* Matt. xix. 28. Here, *In the generation*, must be connected with the following words, and by no means with those that go before. And that this was the common method of speaking among the Jews, appears from Josephus: "To those," says he, "whose fate it is to die for observing the law, God has given the privileges of being born again, and enjoying a more happy life, so that they are gainers by the exchange."* In like manner Philo

* Ἀγέννητος ὁ Θεός, καὶ τὰ συμπαντά γεννῶν, σπείρει μεν τοῦτο το γεννημα τὸ ἴδιον, &c.

† Nobilissimæ sunt ingeniorum familiæ, elige in quam adscici, velis, hac enim ratione, nobis ad arbitrium nostrum nasci licet; nec in nomen tantum adoptaberis, sed et in ipsa bona.

* Τοῖς ὑπὲρ νόμων διαφυλάχθεντων ἀποθανοῦσι ἴδωκεν

saith, "We shall hasten to the generation after death, &c."* On the other hand, it is very well known, that this spiritual regeneration we are speaking of, is often in Scripture called the resurrection.

Of this resurrection, the word of the gospel is, as it were, the trumpet; and, at the same time, the immortal seed of this new birth, and therefore, of immortality itself. Thus it is represented by the apostle Peter, 1 Pet. i. 23, and by the apostle James, who expressly tells us, that *He hath begotten us with the word of truth.* James i. 18. Now, the enlivening virtue and plastic power of this word is derived from the Holy Ghost, who is the true spring and fountain of this new life. Nor are the most extended powers of the human mind, or the strength of its understanding, any more able to restore this life within it, even upon hearing the glad tidings of the gospel, than it was capable of producing itself at first, or of being the author of its own being, or, after death, of restoring itself to life.

To this exalted dignity are admitted the humble, the poor, the obscure, the ignorant, barbarians, slaves, sinners, whom the world look upon as nothing, and hold in the greatest contempt: of these nothing is required but true and sincere faith; no learning, nor noble extract, nor any submission to the Mosaic law; but upon every man of whatever rank or condition, who believes this word, he in return bestows this dignity, *that they should become the sons of God;* that is, that what Christ was by nature, they should become by grace. Now, what is more sublime and exalted than this honor, that those who were formerly *children of Satan*, and *heirs of hell*, should by faith alone be made the *sons of God*, *brethren of Christ*, and *joint heirs* of the heavenly kingdom? If the sacred fire of the Romans happened at any time to be extinguished, it could only be lighted again at the rays of the sun. The life of souls to be sure, is a sacred flame of Divine love: this flame, as we are now born into the froward race of fallen mankind, is, alas! but too truly and unhappily extinguished, and by no means to be kindled again, but by the enlivening light and heat of the *Sun of righteousness*, who is most auspiciously risen upon us.

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## LECTURE XVI.

### REGENERATION.

THE great corruption of mankind, and their innate disposition to every sort of wickedness, even the doctors of the heathen nations, that is, their philosophers and theologers, and their poets also, were sensible of and acknowledged; though they were quite ignorant of the source from which this calamity was derived. They all own, that "it is natural to man to sin."* Even your favorite philosopher, who prevails in the schools, declares that we are "*strongly inclined* to vice;"† and speaking of the charms and allurements of forbidden pleasures, he observes, that mankind by nature "is easily catched in these snares."‡ The Roman philosopher takes notice, that "the way to vice is not only a descent, but a downright precipice."‖ And the comic poet, that "mankind has always been, in every respect, a deceitful, subtle creature."§ The satirist likewise observes, that "we are all easily prevailed on to imitate things that are in their nature wicked and disgraceful."¶ And the lyric poet, that "the human race, bold to attempt the greatest dangers, rushes with impetuosity upon forbidden crimes."**

All the wise men among the heathens exerted their utmost to remedy this evil by precepts and institutions of philosophy, but to very little purpose. They could not, by all their arts and all their precepts, make others better: nay, with regard to most of them, we may say, nor even themselves. But, "when there was no wisdom in the earth," says Lactantius, "that blessed doctor was sent down from heaven, who is the way, the truth, and the life;†† and, by an almighty power, effected what all others had attempted in vain.

It is not at all to be doubted, but the end proposed by philosophy, was to renew and reform mankind, and to reduce the course of their lives to a conformity with the precepts of wisdom and virtue. Whence the common definition given of philosophy, is, that "it is the rule of life, and the art or science of living uprightly." To this purpose Seneca says, "Philosophy is the law of living honestly and uprightly." True religion, to be sure, has the same tendency; but it promotes its end with much greater force, and better success; because its principles are much more exalted, its precepts and instructions are of greater purity, and it is, besides, attended with a Divine power, whereby it makes its way into the hearts of men, and purifies them with the greatest force and efficacy, and yet, at the same time, with the most wonderful pleasure and delight. And this is the *regeneration* of which we are speaking, and whereof we have

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* Θεὸς γίνεσθαι τὸ πάλιν καὶ βίον ἀμείνω λαβεῖν ἐκ περιτροπῆς.—Lib. i. CONT. APP.

* Εἰς παλιγγενεσίαν ὁρμήσομεν μετὰ τὸν θάνατον.

* Συμφύτον εἶναι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὸ ἁμαρτάνειν.

† Ἐκκαταφέρους. ARIST., Eth. ii.

‡ Ἐδόθρατον εἶναι ὑπὸ τῶν τοιούτων.

‖ Ad vitia, non tantum pronum iter, sed et præceps.

§ Δόλερος μὲν αἰεὶ κατὰ πάντα ῥᾴ τρόπον.
Πέφυκεν ἀνθρωπος.

¶ ——— Dociles imitandis
Turpibus et pravis omnes sumus.
JUV. Satyr. xiv.

** ——— Audax omnia perpeti,
Gens humana ruit per vetitum nefas.
HOR. Carm., lib. 1., Od. 3.

†† Sed cum nulla esset sapientia in terris, missus este cœlo doctor ille, via, veritas et vita.

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already observed, that philosophy acknowledged it, even under the same name. But that it effected it, we absolutely deny. Now, it is evident from the very name, that we are to understand by it an inward change, and that a very remarkable one. And since God is called the author and source of this change, whatever the philosophers may have disputed, *pro* and *con*, concerning the origin of moral virtue, we are by no means to doubt but this sacred and Divine change upon the heart of man is produced by an influence truly Divine. And this was even Plato's opinion concerning virtue; nor do I imagine you are unacquainted with it. The same philosopher, and several others besides him, expressly asserted, that virtue was a kind of image or likeness of God, nay, that it was the effect of inspiration, and partook, in some respect, of a kind of Divine nature. "No mind can be rightly disposed without divine influence," says Seneca.* And it was the saying of the Pythagorean philosophers, that "the end of man is to be made like to God."† "This mind," says Trismegistus, "is God in man, and therefore some of the number of men are gods."‡ And a little farther on, "In whatever souls the mind presides, it illustrates them with its own brightness, opposing their immoralities and mad inclinations, just as a learned physician inflicts pain upon the body of his patient, by burning and cutting it, in order to recover it to health: in the same manner, the mind afflicts a voluptuous soul, that it may pull up pleasure by the very roots. For all diseases of the soul proceed from it: impiety is the severest distemper of the soul."‖

What wonder is it, then, if these very thoughts are expressed in the more Divine oracles of the sacred Scriptures more fully, and with greater clearness? and this confirmation of the human mind to the Divine nature, is commonly represented therein, as the great business and the end of all religion.

What was more frequently inculcated upon the ancient church of the Jews, than these words, *Be ye holy, because I am holy?* And that the same ambition is recommended to Christians, appears from the first sermon we meet with in the gospel of our Lord and Savior, who came down to this earth, that he might restore the Divine image upon men. *Be merciful*, says he, *as your Father, who is in heaven, is merciful.* And according to Luke, *Be perfect, as your Father is perfect.* And again, *Blessed are the pure in heart.* And, indeed, this is the true beauty of the heart, and its true nobility; but vice introduces degeneracy, and deformity also.

Now, the more the mind disengages and withdraws itself from "matter that pollutes it,"* that is, from the body it inhabits, the purer and more Divine it constantly becomes, because it attains to a greater resemblance with the Father of spirits, and, as the Apostle Peter expresses, *partakes* more fully *of the Divine nature.* Hence it is, that the Apostle Paul warns us at so great length, and in such strong terms, against *living after the flesh*, as the very death of the soul, and directly opposite to the renewed nature of a Christian. He that is *born of God* is endued with a greatness of soul, that makes him easily despise, and consider as nothing, those things which he prized at a very high rate before: he considers heaven as his country, even while he lives as a stranger on this earth; he aspires at the highest objects, and, flying up toward heaven, with soaring wings, he "looks down with contempt upon the earth."†

And yet, with all this sublimity of mind he joins the deepest humility. But all the allurements of sin, though they continue to have the same appearance they had before, and possibly throw themselves in his way, as the very same that were formerly dear to him, he will reject with indignation, and give them the same answer as St. Ambrose tells us was given by a young convert to his mistress, with whom he had formerly lived in great familiarity: "Though you may be the same, I am not the same I was before."‡

Lactantius elegantly sets forth the wonderful power of religion in this respect; "Give me," says he, "a man that is passionate, a slanderer, one that is headstrong and unmanageable; with a very few of the words of God, I will make him as quiet as a lamb. Give me a covetous, avaricious, or close-handed person; I will presently make him liberal, and oblige him to give away his money in large quantities with his own hands. Give me one that is afraid of pain or of death: he shall, in a very little time, despise crosses, flames, and even Phalaris's bull. Show me a lustful person, an adulterer, a complete debauchee; you shall presently see him sober, chaste, and temperate."‖ So great is the power of Divine wisdom, that, as soon as it is infused into the human breast, it presently expels folly, which is the source and fountain of sin, and so changes the whole man, so refines, and as it were renews him, that you would not know him to be the same. It is prophesied of the days of the Messiah, that *the wolf and the lamb shall dwell together, and*

* Nulla sine Deo bona mens est.

† Τελος ἀνθρώπου μοίωσις Θεῳ.

‡ Οὗτος ὁ νοῦς ἐν μὲν ανθρώποις Θεὸς ἐστίν, διό καὶ τίνες των ανθρῶπων θεοί εισι. [Trismeg.] πεοι του κοινου προς τατ.

‖ Ὁσαὶς ἂν νῦν ψύχαις, &c.

* Ἀπὸ της ὑλῆς βαμβορώσας.

† ——————— udam
Spermit humum fugiente penna.

‡ At ego certe non sum ego.

‖ Da mihi virum qui sit iracundus, maledicus, effrænatus; paucissimis Dei verbis tam placidum quam ovem reddam. Da cupidum, avarum, tenacem; jam tibi eum liberalem dabo, et pecuniam suam propriis plenisque; manibus largientem. Da timidum doloris ac mortis; jam cruces, et ignes, et Phalaridis taurum contemnet. Da libidinosum, adulterum, ganeonem jam sobrium, castum, continentem videbis.

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*the leopard lie down with the kid.* Isa. xi. 6. The gospel has a wonderful effect in softening even the roughest dispositions, and "there is none so wild, but he may be tamed, if he will but patiently give attention to this wholesome doctrine."*

Now, whether you call this renovation or change of the mind, repentance, or Divine love, it makes no difference; for all these, and, indeed, all the Christian graces in general, are, at bottom, one and the same, and, taken together, constitute what we may call *the health and vigor of the mind;* the term under which Aristo of Chios comprehended all the moral virtues. The Apostle Paul, in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. vi. 17, describes these adopted children of God by their repentance: in the Epistle to the Romans, they are characterized by their love, Rom. viii. 28; and in the passage of St. John's gospel we have mentioned already, by their faith, John i. 12. But whatever name it is conveyed by, the change itself is effected by the right hand of the Most High. As to the manner of this divine operation, to raise many disputes about it, and make many curious disquisitions with regard to it, would be not only quite needless, but even absurd. Solomon, in his Ecclesiastes, chap. xi. 5, gives some grave admonitions with regard to the secret processes of nature in forming the fœtus in the womb, to convince us of our blindness with respect to the other works of God: how much more hidden and intricate, and even past our finding out, is this regeneration, which is purely spiritual! This is what our Savior also teaches us, when he compares this new birth to the unconfined and unknown turnings and revolutions of the wind; a similitude which Solomon had lightly touched before, in that passage of the Ecclesiastes, to which we just now alluded. O! that we felt within ourselves this blessed change, though we should remain ignorant with regard to the manner of it; since we are sufficiently apprized of one thing, which it is greatly our interest frequently and seriously to reflect upon! *Unless a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God.* This spiritual progeny is also compared to the dew, the generation whereof is hidden and undiscovered. *Hath the rain a father, and who hath begotten the drops of the dew?* Job xxxiii. 28. Good men are also called *children of light,* and *light in the Lord,* 1 Thess. v. 5; Eph. v. 8. But it is from *the Father of lights* himself, and from his only begotten Son, that these *stars* (for this title of the angels may, without injustice, be applied to them) derive all the light they enjoy. Now, the nature of light is very intricate, and the emanation and the manner of its production is yet a secret even to the most sharp-sighted of those who have made nature their study, and no satisfactory theory of it has yet appeared. But, whatever it is, it was produced by that first and powerful word of Eternal and uncreated light. *Let there be light.* By the same powerful word of the Almighty Father, there immediately springs up in the mind which was formerly quite involved in the darkness of ignorance and error, a Divine and immortal light, which is *the life of men,* and, in effect, the true regeneration. And because this is the most effectual means of purifying the soul, it is ascribed to the *water* and to the *Spirit.* For this illumination of the Holy Ghost is, indeed, the inward baptism of the Spirit; but, in the primitive times of Christianity, the baptism of water, on account of the supposed concurrence of the Spirit, was commonly called the *illumination,* and the solemn seasons appointed for the celebration of this mystery, days of *illumination* or *light.* And in the very same manner, the baptism of the Holy Ghost is by John Baptist called the *baptism of fire,* on account of the wonderful influence it has in illuminating and purifying the soul. It is, to be sure, a celestial fire, quite invisible to our eyes, and of such a nature, that the secret communications of it to our souls can not be investigated. But the sum of all is what follows.

It seemed good to Infinite Goodness and Wisdom, to form a noble piece of coin out of clay, and to stamp his own image upon it, with this inscription, "The earthly son of God;" this is what we call man. But, alas! how soon did this piece of coin fall back to clay again, and thereby lost that true image, and had the inscription shamefully blotted out! From that time, man, who was formerly a Divine creature, and an angel clothed with flesh, became entirely fleshly, and in reality a brute: the soul, that noble and celestial inhabitant of his earthly body, became now quite immersed in matter, and, as it were, entirely converted into flesh, as if it had drunk of the river Lethe. Or, like the son of an illustrious family, carried away in infancy to a far country, it is quite ignorant of its present misery, or the liberty and felicity it has lost, becomes an abject slave, degraded to the vilest employments, which it naturally and with pleasure performs; because, having lost all sense of its native excellence and dignity, and forgotten its heavenly original, it now relishes nothing but earthly things, and, catching at present advantages, disregards eternal enjoyments, as altogether unknown, or removed quite out of sight. But if in any particular soul, either from some spark of its native excellency still remaining alive, or any indistinct report that reaches it, some desires or emotions toward the recovery of its native liberty should arise; yet, as it has no sufficient strength of its own, nor finds any way open that can lead to so great a blessing, these ineffectual wishes come to nothing; and the unhappy soul having lost its hopes, languishes in its chains, and is at last quite stupified.

Philosophy, as we have already observed, perceiving that man was born to higher views

* Nemo adeo ferus est, ut non mitescere possit
Huic modo doctrinæ patientem commodet aurem.

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than this world affords, attempted to raise him from his present dejection, secure his claim to heaven, and restore him to a conformity and likeness to God; but in vain. To redeem the sons of man, and restore them to what they had lost, it was necessary that the eternal Son of God should come down from heaven. Our fall was easily brought about, but our restoration was a work of the greatest difficulty, and only to be performed by the powerful hand of God. There are but few whom the exalted Father of spirits has loved, and Christ has raised up to heaven. He is the source whence the Spirit of God flows down to us; he is the fountain of that new life and sanctified nature, by which we mount toward God, whereby we overcome the world, and, in consequence thereof, are admitted into heaven. And, happy, to be sure, are those truly noble souls whose fate it is to be thus born again, to be admitted into the choirs of the holy angels, and to be clothed with those glorious robes that are whiter than snow! They will follow the Lamb wherever he goes, and he will lead them to the crystal streams, and even to the fountain of life itself.

But all those that are to be the attendants of the Lamb in those blessed pastures which are to be met with in his heavenly country, must, of necessity, even while they live in this lower world, be followers of him in his humble innocence and purity. This spotless, holy, and pure Lamb of God, is the guide and shepherd of a pure and holy flock, a flock dear to God, and of distinguished beauty; but "the shepherd is still more beautiful than they."* But the impure goats and uncleanly hogs he beholds at a distance, and leaves them to unclean spirits, to be possessed by them at pleasure, and afterward to be precipitated into the depth of misery; unless it be determined to deliver some of them from that shocking form, by a wonderful and divine change, and to convert them into lambs, which is effected in proper time, by the influence of the Holy Ghost. Whence they are called the holy, pure, and divine sons of God; and all love to earthly things, all carnal, impure affections, are banished out of those hearts, which are, as it were, temples consecrated henceforth to God: "For the dwelling place of the Holy One must be holy also."†

* Formosi pecoris custos formosior.

† Ἅγιον γὰρ ἅγιον ἐστιν διεπτήριον.

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## LECTURE XVII.

### TRUE FELICITY AND ETERNAL PUNISHMENT.

O HOW insipid and unsatisfactory are all the pleasures of this earthly life which we now live, in respect of that incomparable and altogether heavenly delight which attends the meditation and contemplation of Divine things! When mortals are thus employed, they eat the bread of angels; and if there are any who do not relish the sweetness of this food, it is because the divine part of their composition is become brutish, and, forgetting its original, lies buried in earth and mud. But though the soul is reduced to these woful circumstances, it is not yet so entirely divested of itself, but it still retains some faint remains of its heavenly original and more exalted nature; insomuch, that it can not acquiesce in, or be at all satisfied with those fading enjoyments wherewith it is surrounded, nor think itself happy or easy in the greatest abundance of earthly comforts. And though, possibly, it may not be fully sensible of what it wants; yet it perceives, not without some pain and uneasiness, that something is still wanting to make it happy. The truth is, besides that great and unknown good, even those whom, by an abuse of that term, we call most happy, are in want of a great many things. For, if we look narrowly into the condition of those who are arrived at the highest pitch of earthly splendor, we shall certainly find some defect and imperfection in it, and be obliged to conclude with the poet, that "since the earth began to be inhabited by men, a full cup of good things, without any mixture of evil, never fell to the share of one man; a graceful body is often dishonored by bad morals, and a mind of uncommon beauty is sometime joined to a deformed body," &c.*

But what we call the chief and supreme good must of necessity be complete and entirely free from every defect; and, therefore, what is not in every respect perfect, properly speaking, is not perfect at all. The happiness of rich and great men, which the poor admire and respect, is only a gaudy and splendid species of misery. What St. Bernard says of the rash and ill-founded opinion which the generality of mankind form of the lives of the saints, from the imperfect knowledge they have of them, "They see our crosses, but they see not our comforts,"† may be here inverted: we see the advantages of those men that are puffed up with riches and honors, but we see not their troubles, and vexations. "I wish," says one, "that those who desire riches would consult rich men; they would then, to be sure, be of another opinion."‡

I will spend no more time in describing or lamenting the wretched state of mankind on this earth, because it would answer no end. For, suppose a more complete assemblage of sublunary enjoyments, and a more perfect system of earthly felicity than ever the sun beheld, the mind of man would instantly devour it, and, as if it were still empty and un-

* ——— Etenim mortabilis ex quo
Tellus cœpta coli, nunquam sincera bonorum
Sors ulli concessa viro; quem corpus honestat
Dedecorant mores; animus quem pulchrior orna
Cœpus destituit, &c.

† Cruces nostras vident, unctiones non vident.

‡ Utinam, utinam qui divitias appetunt, cum divitibus deliberarent; certe vota mutarent.

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satisfied, would require something more. And, indeed, by this insatiable thirst, the mind of man discovers its natural excellence and dignity; for thus it proves, that all things here below are insufficient to satisfy or make it happy; and its capacity is so great and extensive, that it can not be filled by the whole of this visible frame of things. For, as St. Augustine observes, "Thou hast made us, O Lord, for thyself, and our hearts are restless till they return to thee."* The mind that makes God its refuge, after it has been much tossed to and fro, and distressed in the world, enjoys perfect peace and absolute security; and it is the fate of those, and those only, who put into this safe harbor, to have what the same St. Augustine calls a very great matter, "The frailty of man, together with the security of God."†

Therefore, it is not without reason, that the royal psalmist boasts not of his victories, nor the splendor of his royal crown, but of this one advantage: *The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup; thou maintainest my lot:* and, on the justest grounds, he immediately adds, *The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.* Psalm xvi. 5, 6. And it is quite agreeable to reason that what improves and completes anything else must be itself more complete and perfect: so that the mind of man can neither be made happy by earthly enjoyments, which are all far inferior to it in dignity, nor be so in itself. Nay, neither can the angels, though of a more perfect and sublime nature, confer felicity either upon men or themselves; but both they and we have our happiness lodged in that Eternal Mind, which alone is its own felicity. Nor is it possible for us to find it anywhere else, but in our union with that Original Wisdom and goodness, from which we at first took our rise. Away, then, with all the fictitious schemes of felicity proposed by the philosophers, even those of them that were most artfully contrived; for even Aristotle's perfection of virtue, as well as what the stoics fancied concerning their wise man, are mere fictions. They are nothing but dreams and fancies, that ought to be banished to Utopia. For what they describe is nowhere to be found among men, and if it were, it would not constitute complete felicity. So far, indeed, they are to be commended, that they call in the mind from external enjoyments to itself; but in this they are defective, that when the mind is returned to itself, they carry it no further, nor direct it to ascend, as it were, above itself. They sometimes, it is true, drop such expressions as these, that "there can be no good disposition of the mind without God;"‡ and that, in order to be happy, the soul must be raised up to divine things: they also tell us, that "the wise man loves God most of all, and for this reason is the most happy man."* But these expressions they drop only at random, and by-the-by. O! how much fuller and clearer are the instructions of the Teacher sent down from heaven: *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* Matt. v. 3.

But because the purest minds of the saints, while they sojourn in this earth, still retain some mixture of earthly dross, and arise not to perfect purity; therefore they can not yet enjoy the full vision of God, nor, consequently, that perfect happiness which is inseparably connected with it. *For they see only darkly, and through a glass.* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. But with the advantage even of this obscure light, they direct their steps, and go on cheerful and unwearied. The long-wished-for day will at length come, when they will be admitted into the fullest light. That day, which the unhappy men of this world dread as their last, the sons of light wish for, as their nativity into an endless life, and embrace it with the greatest joy when it comes. And this, indeed, seems to me to be the strongest argument for another life and an immortality to come. For since no complete or absolutely perfect happiness is to be found in this life, it must certainly follow, that either there is no such thing to be had anywhere, or we must live again somewhere after our period here is out. And O! what *fools* are we, and *how slow of heart to believe*, who think so rarely, and with such coolness, of that blessed country; and that, in this parched and thirsty land, where even those few who are so happy have only some foretastes of that supreme happiness. But when they remove hence, *they shall be abundantly satisfied* (or, as the word ought to be translated, *inebriabuntur, intoxicated*), *O Lord, with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.* Psalm xxxvi. 9. Thus the divine psalmist expresses it; and, to be sure, it is very surprising that the great and ancient philosopher Pythagoras, in communicating his thoughts upon the same subject, should happen to fall upon the very same figure; for he used to promise those of his disciples who conducted themselves right in this life, that they should be continually *drunk*† in that which is to come.

But what we said formerly, of the felicity of the life to come, and all that we could say, were we to treat of the same subject over again, is but mere trifling. And yet it is not disagreeable to hear children speak, even with stammering, about the dignity of their father, and of the riches and magnificence of his inheritance. It is pleasant and decent to speak of our native country, even while we are sojourning in a foreign land. But, for the pres-

* Fecisti nos, Domine, propter te, et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec in te redeat.

† Habere fragilitatem hominis et securitatem Dei.

‡ Nullum posse esses in Deo bonam mentem.

* Ἀρα ὁ σόφος Θεοφιλέστατος, καὶ διά τοῦτο εὐδαιμονέστατος.

† Μεθην ἀενναον.



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ent. I shall insist no longer on this subject, but, turning the tables, lay before you that dreadful punishment which stands in opposition to this happiness, by presenting you only with a transient view of the future misery of the wicked. And though this is indeed a most unpleasant task, yet nothing but our own carelessness and inattention can render it useless.

Here, first of all, it is to be observed, that as, in this life, there is no perfect felicity; so neither here is there any complete misery. Those whom we look upon as the most wretched in this world, have their sufferings checkered with many intervals of ease. But the misery to come admits of no abatement; it is all of a piece, without admitting any mixture of relief. They are surely mad with their notions, who here talk of the advantages of being or existence, and contend that it is more desirable to be miserable than not to be at all.* For my part, I am fully satisfied they can never persuade any man of the truth of their assertion; nor even believe it themselves, when they think seriously on the subject. But not to insist on this, it is certain that all kind of delights are for ever banished from that eternal and frightful prison. There there is no light, no day, nor sleep, which is the blessing of the night, and, indeed, nothing at all but places full of darkness, precipices, nakedness, and all kinds of horror; no entertainments, merry meetings, nor any sensible pleasure; and to be for ever separated from all such must be no small misery, especially to those who used to pass their time amid such scenes of mirth and jollity, and imagined themselves in some measure happy therein. And that the remembrance of this may distress them the more, they will be continually haunted with a thought that will cleave to them like a worm devouring their bowels, and constantly keep them in mind, that out of a distracted fondness for those fleeting pleasures which have now flown away, without hope of returning, they have lost those joys that are heavenly and eternal, whereof they will have some knowledge; but what kind of knowledge that will be, and how far extended to enhance their torments, is not ours to determine. But who will attempt to express the excess of their misery, or describe those streams of brimstone, and eternal flames of Divine wrath? Or rather, who will not tremble, I say not in describing them, but even in thinking of them, and be quite overpowered with an idea so shocking?

That I may no further attempt to speak things unutterable,† and to derogate from a grand subject by inadequate expressions,‡ behold now, my dear youths, if you believe these things, behold, I say, you have now life and death laid before you; choose for yourselves. And that you may not put off a matter of such importance, consider these things, I pray, seriously, and say to yourselves, concerning the vanishing shadows of external things, How long will these enjoyments last? O! how soon will they pass! Even while I am speaking these words, while I am thinking of them, they fly past me. Is any one oppressed with calamities? Let them say cheerfully, with a remarkably good man, "Lord, while I am here, kill me, burn me, only spare me there."* Is there any one among you of weak capacity, unhappy in expressing himself, of an unfavorable aspect, or deformed in body? Let him say with himself, "It is a matter of small consequence; I shall soon leave this habitation, and, if I am but good myself, be soon removed to the mansions of the blessed." Let these thoughts prevent his being dejected in mind, or overcome with too much sorrow. If any one is distinguished by a good understanding, or outward beauty, or riches, let him reflect, and seriously consider, how soon all excellencies of this kind will pass away, that he may not be vain, or lifted up with the advantage of fortune. Let it be the chief care and study of you all to avoid the works of darkness, that so you may escape utter and eternal darkness; and to embrace with open and cheerful hearts that Divine light which hath shone from heaven, that, when you are divested of these bodies, you may be received into the glorious mansions of that blessed and perfect light.

* Miserum esse quam non esse.

† Τα αλαλητα λαλεισθαι.

‡ Magna modis tenuare parvis.

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## LECTURE XVIII.

### THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, AND THAT IT IS THE TRUE WAY TO HAPPINESS.

I CONFESS, young gentlemen, that whenever I think on the subject, I can not help wondering at the indolence and madness of mankind. For though we boast that to order our affairs with prudence and discretion, and conduct our lives according to the principles of reason, is the great privilege and ornament of our nature, which distinguishes us from the brute creatures; how few are there, who, in this respect, act like men, who propose to themselves an end, and direct all their actions to the attainment of it! It is very certain that the greatest part of mankind, with a folly something more than childish, go in quest of painted butterflies, or commonly pursue the birds with stones and clods. And even those who spin out their lives to the utmost extent of old age, for the most part gain little by it, but only this, that they may be called Παῖδες πολυχρόνιοι, very aged children; being as ignorant as infants why they came into the world, and what will become of them when they leave it. Of all questions, therefore, none can be more properly

‡ Domine, hic ure, cæde, modo illi parcas.

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proposed to you, who are just upon the verge of manhood, I mean entering upon a rational life, than this, Whither are you going? What good have you in view? To what end do you propose to live? For hence, possibly, your minds may be excited within you to an earnest desire after that perfect and supreme good; and you may not content yourselves with cool speculations upon this subject, as if it were a logical or philosophical problem that falls in your way of course, but with that application which is proper in a question concerning a matter of the greatest moment, where it highly concerns us to be well informed, and where the highest rewards and greatest dangers are proposed to our view. And in this hope, I have often addressed myself to you upon the subject of happiness, or the supreme good, at different periods of time; entertaining you, in the intervals, with essays and suitable exhortations upon other subjects, yet so as to observe a kind of method, and keep up a connexion throughout the whole. I have taken notice of the name and general notion of happiness, the universal desires and wishes whereby men are excited to the pursuit of it, the no less universal because natural ignorance of mankind, and their errors and mistakes in the search of it. Whence it happens, that, as they all run in the wrong road, the faster they advance, the farther they depart from it; and like those who ply the oars in a boat, they look one way and move another. And though it seemed almost unnecessary, as facts sufficiently demonstrate the truth of our assertion, yet, by a brief recapitulation, wherein we took notice only of the principal heads and classes of things, we proved that happiness is by no means to be found in this earth, nor in any earthly enjoyments whatsoever. And this is no more than all, even fools as well as wise men, are willing to own: they not only pronounce one another unhappy, but, with regard to this life, all of them in general, and every one for himself in particular, acknowledge that they are so. And, in this respect, experience fully justify their relief; so that, if there were no further prospect, I am apt to believe all mankind would agree in that common saying, that "if mankind were apprized beforehand of the nature of this life, and it were left to their own option, none would accept of it."* As the immortality of the soul has a near connexion with this subject, and is a natural consequence from it, we therefore, in the next place, bestowed some time in illustrating that doctrine. In the last place, we advanced some thoughts upon future happiness and misery, so far as is consistent with the weakness of our capacities to comprehend things so little known, and to express such as are in a great measure ineffable.

Having treated of these things according to our measure, it remains that we now inquire about the way which directly leads into that happy city, or to that happiness which is reserved in the heavens. This is a great and important article, comprehending the end and design of our life, as well as the hopes and comforts of it; and is very proper to be first treated of in a catechetical, or, indeed, any methodical system of theology, as appears from reason and precedents: for by this discussion we are immediately introduced into the whole doctrine of true religion. Accordingly, the first question in the generally-received catechism, which you have in your hands, is, "What is your only consolation in life and death?"* And the first question of another catechism, which not long ago was used, particularly in this university, is, "What is the only way to true felicity?"† For the salvation and happiness of mankind, in subordination to the glory of God (which is, to be sure, the supreme end of all), is the peculiar and genuine scope of theology; and from it, the definition of this science seems to be most properly drawn. Nor do I imagine that any one is so weak as hence to conclude that it ought to be called anthropology, rather than theology; for though it not only treats of the happiness of mankind, but also has this happiness, as has been observed, for its chief end and design; yet, with good reason, and on many accounts, it has obtained this more sublime title. It has God for its author, whom the wisest of men would in vain attempt to find out, but from the revelation he has made of himself; every such attempt being as vain as it would be to look for the sun, in the night-time, by the light of a candle; for the former, like the latter, can only be seen by his own light. God can not be known but so far as he reveals himself: which Sophocles has also admirably well expressed: "You will never," says he, "understand those divine things which the gods have thought proper to conceal, even though you should ransack all nature."‡

Nor has this sacred science God for its author only, but also for its subject and its ultimate end; because the knowledge of him and his worship comprehends the whole of religion, the beatific vision of him includes in it the whole of our happiness, and that happiness is at last resolved into the Divine grace and bounty.

I should therefore choose to give this brief and clear definition of theology, viz.: That it is a divine doctrine, directing man to real felicity as his chief end, and conducting him to it by the way of true religion. I call it a *doctrine*, because it is not considered here as a habit in the mind, but as a summary of celestial truth. I call it a *divine doctrine*, for all the reasons already mentioned; because, for

* Vitam hanc, si scientibus daretur, neminem accepturum.—SENECA.

* Quæ est unica tua consolatio in vita et in morte?
† Quæ est unica ad veram felicitatem via?
‡ Ἀλλ' οὐ λάρ ἂν τὰ θεῖα πρόσταντος θεοῦ,
Μάθοις ἄν, οὐδ' εἰ πάντ' ἐπεξέλθοις σκοπῶν.

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instance, it is from God, he is the subject of it, and it all terminates in him at last. I call it a *doctrine directing man*, for I confine my notion of it to that doctrine only which was sent down from heaven for that purpose. What signify, then, those distinctions, which are indeed sounding, but quite tedious and foreign to the purpose, that divide theology into *archetypal* and *ectypal*, and again into the theology of the church militant, and that of the church triumphant? What they call *archetypal theology* is very improperly so named, for it is that perfect knowledge (αυτοσοφια) which God has of himself. And the theology of the church triumphant ought rather to be called θεοψια, the beatific vision of God. The theology in question is that *day-spring from on high, which hath visited us, to give light to them which sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace.* Luke i. 78, 79. That peace is true happiness, and the way of peace is true religion; concerning which I shall offer a few thoughts, and very briefly. First of all, you are to observe that man is not a lawless creature, but capable of a law, and actually subject to one. This expression conveys no harsh, no dishonorable idea; nay, this subjection is so far from being a burden, that it is the greatest honor. To be capable of a law, is the mark and ornament of an intelligent, rational soul, and that which distinguishes it from the brutes; it evidently supposes a resemblance to God, and an intercourse with heaven. And to live actually under the direction of religion and the law, is the great honor and ornament of human life, and that distinguishes it from the irregular conduct of the brute creation. For, as the poet expresses it, "One beast devours another, fishes prey upon fishes, and birds upon birds, because they are subject to no law; but mankind lives under a just law, which makes their condition far preferable."*

The brute creatures devour one another without blame, because they have no law; but, as Juvenal observes, "Men alone, of all earthly creatures, as they derive their reason from the highest heaven, are venerable for their understanding, which renders them capable of inquiring into Divine things, and qualifies them for learning arts, and reducing them to practice."†

And hence it appears that we were born subjects to religion and an eternal law of nature; for since our blessed Creator has thought proper to endow us with a mind and understanding and powers sufficient for that purpose, to be sure we are bound by an indispensable law to acknowledge the primary and eternal Fountain of our own being and of all created things, to love him above all other objects, and obey his commands without reserve or exception. So that in this very law of nature is founded a strong obligation upon us to give due obedience to every Divine positive institution which he shall think proper to add for securing the purposes of religion and equity. Wherefore, when our first parents, by eating the forbidden fruit, transgressed the symbolical command intended as a proof of their obedience, by that very act they most basely broke the primary and great law of nature, which is the foundation of religion, and of every other law whatever.

It is not my intention to speak here of our redemption by the Messias, the only begotten Son of God the Creator: it is sufficient for our present purpose to observe, that our great Redeemer has indeed delivered us from the chains of sin and death, but has by no means dissolved the bonds of religion, and the everlasting law of nature. Nay, these are, in many respects, strengthened and confirmed by this redemption: and a cheerful submission to them by virtue of his Spirit, who is poured out upon us, is a great part of that royal *liberty of the sons of God*, which is secured to us by his means, as by imitating his example, we arrive at the full possession of it, which is reserved for us in the heavenly kingdom. The way, therefore, to happiness, which we are in search of, is *true religion*, and such, in a very remarkable manner, is that of Christianity.

On the truth and excellence of this religion you have a great many learned writers, both ancient and modern. And indeed, it is exceeding plain, from its own internal evidence, that, of all the forms of religion that ever the world saw, there is none more excellent than that of Christianity, which we profess, wherein we glory, and in which we think ourselves happy amid all the troubles of the world: there is none that is more certain and infallible, with regard to its history; more sublime with regard to its mysteries; more pure and perfect in its precepts, or more venerable for the grave simplicity of its rites and worship; nay, it appears evident that this religion alone is, in every respect, incomparably preferable to every other. It remains, young gentlemen —What do you think I am going to say? It remains, that we *become true Christians*. I repeat it again, if we will be happy, *let us be Christians*. You will say, "Your wish is easily satisfied: you have your desire—*we are all Christians already.*" I wish it may be so! I will not, however, object to any particular person on this head. But every one of you, by a short trial, wherein he will be both witness and judge, may settle this important point within himself. *We are all Christians.* Be it so. But are we *poor in spirit?* Are we humble, meek, and *pure in heart?* Do we *pray without ceasing?* Have we nailed all our carnal appetites and desires to our Sa-

* Ἰχθύσι μεν και θηρσὶ, και ὀιωνοῖς πετεηνοῖς
Ἔσθειν ἀλλήλους, ὁτι οὐ δίκη ἐστὶν ἐν αὐτοις,
Ἀνθρωποισι δ' ἔδωκε δίκην ἡ πολλὸν ἀριστη
Γίνεται.

† ——— Venerabile soli
Sortiti ingenium divinorumque capaces,
Atque exercendis, capiendisque artibus apte
Sensum à cœlesti demissum traximus arce.
JUVENAL, Sat. XV.

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vior's cross, *living no longer to ourselves, but to him that died for us?* This is the true description of a Christian, by the testimony of that gospel which we acknowledge to be Christ's. And those who are entire strangers to these dispositions of mind, know not, to be sure, *the way of peace.* These I earnestly entreat and beseech to rouse themselves, and shake off their indolence and sloth, lest, by indulging the vile desires of the flesh, they lose their souls for ever. But if there are any among you, and, indeed, I believe there are some, who with all their hearts aspire to these Christian virtues, and by their means, to that kingdom, which *can never be shaken, Be strong in the Lord, have your loins girt about with truth, and be sober, and hope to the end.* You will never repent of this holy warfare, where the battle is so short, the victory so certain, and your triumphal crown, and the peace procured by this conflict, will last for ever.

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## LECTURE XIX.

### THAT HOLINESS IS THE ONLY HAPPINESS ON THIS EARTH.

The journey we are engaged in is indeed great, and the way up-hill; but the glorious prize which is set before us is also great, and our great and valiant Captain, who has long ago ascended up on high, supplies us with strength. If our courage at any time fails us, let us fix our eyes upon him, and, according to the advice of the apostle, in his divine epistle to the Hebrews (chap. xii. 2), *Look unto Jesus,* removing our eyes from all inferior objects, that, being carried up aloft, they may be fixed upon him; which the original words seem to import. Then, being supported by the Spirit of Christ, we shall overcome all those obstacles in our way, that seem most difficult to our indolent and effeminate flesh. And though the way from the earth toward heaven is by no means easy, yet even the very difficulty will give us pleasure, when our hearts are thus eagerly engaged and powerfully supported. Even difficulties and hardships are attended with particular pleasure, when they fall in the way of a courageous mind. As the poet expresses it, "Serpents, thirst, and burning sand, are pleasing to virtue. Patience delights in hardships; and honor, when it is dearly purchased, is possessed with the greater satisfaction."*

If what we are told concerning that glorious city, obtain credit with us, we shall cheerfully travel toward it, nor shall we be at all deterred by the difficulties that may be in the way. But, however, as it is true, and more suitable to the weakness of our minds, which are rather apt to be affected with things present and near, than such as are a a great distance, we ought not to pass over in silence that the way to the happiness reserved in heaven, which leads through this earth, is not only agreeable because of the blessed prospect it opens, and the glorious end to which it conducts, but also for its own sake, and on account of the innate pleasure to be found in it, far preferable to any other way of life that can be made choice of, or indeed imagined. Nay, that we may not, by low expressions, derogate from a matter so grand and so conspicuous, that holiness and true religion which leads directly to the highest felicity, is itself the only happiness, as far as it can be enjoyed on this earth. Whatever naturally tends to the attainment of any other advantage, participates, in some measure, of the nature of that advantage. Now the way to perfect felicity, if anything can be so, is a means that, in a very great measure, participates of the nature of its end; nay, it is the beginning of that happiness: it is also to be considered as a part of it, and differs from it, in its completest state, not so much in kind as in degree. So that in Scripture it has the same names: as, for instance, in that passage of the evangelist, *This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God.* John xvii. 3. That is, not only the way to eternal life, but also the beginning and first rudiments of it, seeing the same knowledge, when completed, or the full beatific vision of God, is eternal life in its fulness and perfection. Nor does the divine apostle make any distinction between these two: *Now,* says he, *we see darkly through a glass; but then we shall see openly,* or, as he expresses it, *face to face. Now I know in part; but then I shall know as I also am known.* I Cor. xiii. 12. That celestial life is called an *inheritance in light,* Col. i. 12; and the heirs of it, even while they are sojourning in this earth, *children of the light,* 1 Thess. v. 5; and, expressly, *light in the Lord. You were,* says the apostle, *sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.* Eph. v. 8. They will be there perfectly holy, and without spot; and even here they are called holy, and, in some respect, they are so. Hence it is, that those who are really and truly good and pious, are, in Scripture, often called blessed, though they are not fully and perfectly so. *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord.* Psalm cxii. 1. *And blessed are the undefiled in the way.* Psalm cxix. 1.

Even the philosophers give their testimony to this truth; and their sentiments, on this subject, are not altogether to be rejected: for they almost unanimously are agreed, that felicity, so far as it can be enjoyed in this life, consists solely, or at least principally, in virtue. But, as to their assertion, that this virtue is perfect in a perfect life, it is rather expressing what were to be wished, than describing things as they are. They might

* ——— Serpens, sitis, ardor arenæ
Dulcia virtuti. Gaudet patientia duris:
Lætius est quoties magno sibi constat honestum.
LUCAN, lib. ix., 9.

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nave said with more truth and justice, that it is imperfect in an imperfect life; which, no doubt, would have satisfied them, if they had known that it was to be made perfect in another place, and another life, that truly deserves the name, and will be complete and perfect. In this, however, we heartily agree with them, that virtue, or, as we rather choose to express it, piety, which is absolutely the sum and substance of all virtues and all wisdom, is the only happiness of this life, so far as it is capable thereof.

And if we seriously consider this subject but a little, we shall find the saying of the wise king Solomon concerning this wisdom, to be unexceptionably true: *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

Doth religion require anything of us more than that we live *soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world?* Now what, I pray, can be more pleasant or peaceable than these? Temperance is always at leisure, luxury always in a hurry: the latter weakens the body and pollutes the soul; the former is the sanctity, purity, and sound state of both. It is one of Epicurus's fixed maxims, that "life can never be pleasant without virtue."* Vices seize upon men with the violence and rage of furies; but the Christian virtues replenish the breast which they inhabit, with a heavenly peace and abundant joy, and thereby render it like that of an angel. The slaves of pleasure and carnal affections, have within them, even now, an earnest of future torments; so that in this present life, we may truly apply to them that expression in the Revelations, *They that worship the beast have no rest day nor night.* "There is perpetual peace with the humble," says the most devout à Kempis; "but the proud and the covetous are never at rest."†

If we speak of charity, which is the root and spring of justice, what a lasting pleasure does it diffuse through the soul! "Envy," as the saying is, "has no days of festivity:"‡ it enjoys not even its own advantages, while it is tormented with those it sees in the possession of others. But charity is happy, not only in its own enjoyments, but also in those of others, even as if they were its own: nay, it is then most happy in the enjoyment of its own good things, when, by liberality, it makes them the property of others. In short, it is a Godlike virtue.‖ There is nothing more Divine in man, "than to wish well to man, and to do good to as many as one possibly can."§ But piety, which worships God in constant prayer, and celebrates him with the highest praises, raises man above himself, and gives him rank among the angels. And contemplation, which is indeed the most genuine and purest pleasure of the human soul, and the very summit of felicity, is nowhere so sublime and enriched, as it will be found to be in true religion, where it may expatiate in a system of Divine truths most extensive, clear, and infallibly certain, mysteries that are most profound, and hopes that are the most exalted: and he that can render these subjects familiar to his mind, even on this earth, enjoys a life replete with heavenly pleasure.

I might enlarge greatly on this subject, and add a great many other considerations to those I have already offered; but I shall only further observe, that that sweet virtue of contentment, so effectual for quieting the mind, which philosophy sought for in vain, religion alone has found; and also discovered, that it takes its rise from a firm confidence in the almighty power of Divine Providence. For what is there that can possibly give uneasiness to him who commits himself entirely to that Paternal Goodness and Wisdom, which he knows to be infinite, and securely devolves the care of all his concerns upon it.

If any of you object (what has been observed before), that we often see good men meet with severe treatment, and also read that *many are the afflictions of the just;* I answer, do you not also read what immediately follows? *But the Lord delivereth him out of them all.* Psalm xxxiv. 19. And it would be madness to deny, that this more than compensates the other. But neither are the wicked quite exempted from the misfortunes and calamities of life; and when they fall upon them, they have nothing to support them under such pressures, none to extricate or deliver them.

But a true Christian, encouraged by a good conscience, and depending upon the Divine favor, bears with patience all these evils, by the efforts of generous love and unshaken faith: they all seem light to him; he despises what he suffers, while he waits with patience for the object of his hope. And, indeed, what, either in life or in death, can he be afraid of, whose *life is hid with Christ in God;* and of whom it may be justly said, without exaggeration, "If the world should be crushed and broken to pieces, he would be undaunted, even while the ruins fell upon his head?"*

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## LECTURE XX.

OUR HAPPINESS, PARTICULARLY THAT IT LIES IN GOD, WHO ALONE CAN DIRECT US TO THE TRUE WAY OF ATTAINING TO IT; THAT THIS WAY HE HAS DISCOVERED IN THE SACRED SCRIPTURES, THE DIVINE AUTHORITY WHEREOF IS ASSERTED AND ILLUSTRATED.

THESE two expressions, that "there is a beginning, and that there is also an end,"† con-

* Ἀνευ ἀρετῆς ουκ εἶναι ἡδέως ζῆν.

† Jugis pax cum humili, superbus autem et avarus nunquam quiescunt.

‡ Invidia festos dies non agit.

‖ Ἀρετὴ θεο-είκελος.

§ Omnibus bene velle, et quam plurimis possit benefacere

* Si fractus illabatur orbis,
Impavidum ferient ruinæ.—Hor., lib. iii., Od. 3.

† Ἔστιν ἄρα τις ἀρχὴ, καὶ ἔστιν ἄρα τι τέλος.

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very matters great in themselves, and which ought to be considered as of vast importance to us. It is absolutely necessary that there should be some one Principle of all things; and by an equal degree of necessity, this Principle must be, of all others, the greatest and the best. It is also necessary that He who gave being to all things, must have proposed to himself some end to be attained by the production and disposal of them; but, as the end of the Best of all agents must itself also be the highest and the best, this end can be no other than himself. And the reasonings of the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, concerning the oath of God, may also be applied to this case: *As he had no greater to swear by*, says the apostle, *he swore by* HIMSELF. In like manner, as he had no greater or better end to propose, he proposed HIMSELF. *He hath made all things for himself*, says the author of the book of Proverbs, *even the wicked for the day of evil.* Prov. xvi. 4. And the apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, gives us a lively description of that incomparable circle, the most complete of all figures: *Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever, Amen.* Rom. x. 36.

Now man, the ornament and masterpiece of all the visible creation, by extraordinary art, and in a method peculiar to himself, returns to his first Original, and has his Creator, not only for the principle of his being, and of his well-being, but also for his end. Thus, by a wonderful instance of wisdom and goodness, God has so connected his own glory with our happiness, that we can not properly intend or desire the one, but the other must follow of course, and our felicity is at last resolved into his eternal glory. The other works of God serve to promote his honor; but man, by rational knowledge and will, offers himself, and all that he has, as a sacrifice to his Creator. From his knowledge of him, he is induced to love him; and in consequence of his love, he attains at last to the enjoyment of him. And it is the wisdom, as well as the happiness of man, to propose to himself, as the scope and ultimate end of his life, that very thing which his exalted Creator had proposed before.

But, that we may proceed gradually in our speculations upon this subject, we must first conclude, that there is a proper end intended for man; that this end is suited to his nature, and perfectly accommodated to all his wants and desires; that so the principal part of this wonderful fabric may not be quite irregular, and labor under a manifest imperfection.

Nor can there be a more important speculation, nor one more worthy of man, than that which concerns his own end, and that good which is fully and perfectly suited to his circumstances. Chance of fortune must, of necessity, have a great influence in our life, when we live at random: we must, therefore, if we be wise, or rather that we may be wise, propose to ourselves an end, to which all our actions ought to have a reference, and by which, as a certain fixed star, we are to direct our course. But it is surprising to observe, how much all the wisest men among the heathens were perplexed in their inquiries after this end, and into how many different opinions they were divided about it. Of this, however, we have spoken at greater length in another place.

Now, to be brief, it is necessary, that this good, or end, should be "perfectly suitable, not easily taken away, nay, such as we can by no means be deprived of; and finally, it must consist of such things as have a particular relation to the soul, and not of eternal enjoyments."* Whence "slavish and brutal pleasures,"† vain and perishing honors and riches, which only serve to support and promote the former, are in this inquiry, justly, and without the least hesitation, hissed off the stage by all sound philosophers; who with great unanimity acknowledge, that our felicity consists solely, or at least principally, in virtue. But your favorite philosopher, Aristotle, and the peripatetics who are his followers, seem to doubt whether virtue alone be sufficient for this purpose, and not to be very consistent with themselves. The stoics, who proceeded with greater courage, and acted more like men, affirmed, that virtue was fully sufficient for this purpose, without the helps and supplements required by the former. And that, while they bestowed such high praises on virtue, they might not seem to have quite forgotten God, they not only said, that virtue was *something Divine*, in which they were joined by Aristotle, but also concluded, that their wise man did all things "with a direct reference to God."‡ It was also a general maxim with the followers of Plato, that "the end of man is, to be, as far as is possible, made like unto God."‖ And Plato himself, in his second book of laws, and in his Phædo, asserts, that man's chief good is the *knowledge of the truth:* yet, as this knowledge is not perfect in the present life, he is of opinion, that it can scarcely be said of any man, that he is happy here below; but there is hope to be entertained concerning the dead, provided they are purified before they leave the world. But there are two things particularly, with regard to this question, which our religion and most precious faith teaches with incomparably greater fulness and evidence, than all the schools and books of the philosophers.

1. That our felicity is not to terminate in ourselves, but in God. *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord;* and, *The pure in heart shall see God.* Psalm cxii. 1; Matt. v. 8.

* Τελεῖον, καὶ ἀνταρκές, καὶ ὑποφάιρετον, imo ἀναφαίρετον, καὶ των περὶ ψυχῆς, καὶ οὐ των ἐκτος.

† Ἀνδραποδώδεις καὶ θηριώδεις ἡδονας.

‡ Μετ' ἀναφορᾶς εἰς τον Θεόν.

‖ Τέλος ἀνθρώπου ὁμοιώσις Θεῶ κατα το δύνατον.

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"To seek God," says St. Augustine, "is to desire happiness; and to find him is that happiness."*

2. That our happiness is not confined within the limits of this short life, nor does it end with it: on the contrary, it is scarce begun in this world, but when the present life comes to a period, then this happiness is completed and becomes eternal. Our life on this earth, therefore, is only so far happy as it has a resemblance to that we shall enjoy in heaven, and becomes, as it were, an earnest of it: that is, when it is employed in pure and sincere piety, in obedience to the will of God, and an ambition to promote his glory, till we arrive at that happy state, where our hunger and thirst shall be abundantly satisfied, and yet our appetites never cloyed.

For it is evident, that man, in this life, becomes so much the more perfect and happy, in proportion as he has his mind and affections more thoroughly conformed to the pattern of that most blessed and perfect life. And this is, indeed, the great ambition of a true Christian; this is his study, which he ceases not to pursue with ardor day and night: nor does he let so much as one day pass without copying some lines of that perfect pattern. And the more he advances in purity of mind, the greater progress he makes in the knowledge and contemplation of Divine things.

But who will instruct us with regard to the means of reaching this blessed mark? Who will show us how we may attain this conformity to God, and most effectually promote his honor and glory, so that at last we may come to the enjoyment of him in that endless life, and be for ever satisfied with the beatific vision of him? What faithful guide shall we find to direct us in this way? Surely he himself must be our leader: there is no other besides him who can answer our purpose. It is he alone that acquaints us with his own nature, as far as it is necessary for us to know it; and he alone that directs us to the way wherein he chooses to be worshipped. "God can not be known but by his own revelation of himself."† When he is pleased to wrap himself up in a cloud, neither man in his original integrity, nay, nor even the angels, can know or investigate his nature or his intentions. We are indeed acquainted in the sacred records, *That the heavens declare the glory of God* (Psalm xix. 1); and this, to be sure, is very true in certain respects; but they do by no means declare the hidden mysteries of the Creator, nor his intentions, and the manner of that worship and service he requires from his reasonable creatures. And therefore the psalmist, having begun the psalm with the voice and declaration of the heavens, immediately after mentions another light much clearer than the sun himself, and a volume or book more perfect than the language of the spheres. Nothing is more certain than that the doctrine which leads us to God, must take its rise from him: for, by no art whatever can the waters be made to rise higher than their fountain. It was therefore absolutely necessary for the purpose I have mentioned, that some revelation concerning God should be made to mankind by himself: and, accordingly, he did reveal himself to them from the beginning. And these revelations, the father of lies mimicked by those delusions of his, that were published by the heathen oracles. The Divine wisdom, in revealing himself to mankind, has thought proper, at different periods of time, to make use of different methods and ways, or, according to that of the Epistle to the Hebrews, *at sundry times, and in divers manners;* but at last it seemed good to him, that this sacred doctrine should be committed to writing, that with the greater certainty and purity it might be handed down to succeeding ages. If we consider his absolute power, it would certainly have been as easy for him to have preserved this doctrine pure and entire, without committing it to writing; but, for the most part, he has been pleased to make use of means naturally suited and adapted to his purpose, and disposes all things so as effectually to secure his ends, yet, in an easy natural manner, suited to our capacities and conceptions of things.

If any one would prove, that these books, which we receive as such, are in fact the repositories of this sacred and celestial doctrine, the most proper method he could take, would be first to show that the sacred history and doctrines contained in them, are true; and then from their own testimony to conclude them Divine.

For, the truth of our religion being once well established, it is, to be sure, a most just *postulatum*, and such as ought not to be denied to any sect of men, that in this instance, the testimony of the Christian church should be believed, when it points out the books wherein the sum and substance of that religion are originally and authentically deposited.

The truth of the sacred history being once granted, the Divinity of the doctrine will naturally follow of course, as the history mentions so many and so great miracles that were wrought in confirmation of the doctrine: those particularly that were performed in proof of the Old Testament by Moses, the servant of God, by whose ministry the law was given to the Jews; and those that were wrought in confirmation of the New, by Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, and author of the Evangelic Law; as, also, those that were wrought by his servants the apostles, and other Christians. And absolutely to deny the force of all these, would be an instance of impudence and obstinacy so great, that the keenest enemies of the Christian name of old, did not venture upon it. But the Scriptures have two great evidences of their Divinity,—

* Secutio Dei appetitus beatitatis, consecutio beatitas.

† Non potest Deus, nisi de Deo, intelligi.

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their own internal character, and that external testimony.

There are two things which principally prove their external character. 1. The incomparable sublimity and purity of the doctrine they contain: for in vain will you look for such profound mysteries, and such pure and holy precepts, anywhere else. 2. The inimitable and evidently Divine majesty of the style, attended, at the same time, with a surprising and wonderful simplicity. Their voice is not the voice of man; but the whole of them, notwithstanding their great extent, sounds something more grand than can be expected from the mouths of mortal men. Nor ought we to pass over that Divine efficacy which the Scriptures have not only to move the minds of men, but also, by a Divine operation,* to change them into something quite different from what they were before: according to that of Lactantius, "Give me a fierce, cruel, and passionate man, with a few of the words of God I will make him as meek as a lamb," &c.† And the external testimony already mentioned, has, to be sure, as much weight as anything of that kind can possibly have. Who would deny to the regular succession of the catholic church, the credit of a witness? Who, on the other hand, would claim the authority of a judge and arbitrator? It would be quite silly to ascribe to the church a decisive power; as if, when a book were first presented to it, or brought out of any place where it had been long concealed, it could immediately pronounce whether that book was of Divine authority or not. The church is only a witness with regard to those books we acknowledge; and its testimony extends no further than this, that they were received in the first ages of Christianity, as sacred and Divinely inspired, and, as such, handed down from age to age, to the church that now is. And he that would venture to discredit this testimony, must have a heart of lead and a face of brass.

There is no occasion to dispute so fiercely about the inward testimony of the Holy Ghost: for I am persuaded that those who talk about it, understand nothing more by it, than that the Holy Spirit produces in the hearts of men that faith whereby they cheerfully and sincerely receive these books, and the doctrine contained in them, as Divine: because such a faith either includes, in the very notion of it, or at least is necessarily connected with, a religious frame of mind, and a sincere disposition to universal obedience. And *he that believeth*, as the Apostle John expresseth it, *has this testimony in himself*, though he can not convey, or transfer it to others, 1 John v. 10. Now, to assert the necessity of such an internal testimony, is nothing more than to say, that whatever evidence the Scripture may have it itself, or from other considerations, yet, the Divine faith of this truth must be from above. And he that would deny this, would thereby plainly discover that he was an entire stranger to that faith itself. "The Scripture," says Thomas à Kempis, "must surely be believed and understood, by means of the same Spirit by whom it was at first delivered."* And, as St. Augustine expresses it, "the only effectual teacher is he who has his chair in heaven, and yet, instructs the hearts of men on this earth."† The same Divine Spirit plants faith in the mind, together with the proper intelligence of Divine things, and daily augments and improves these dispositions. This great gift of the Spirit is, therefore, to be sought by fervent and constant prayer; and the Son of God, who is truth itself, has assured us, that his most bountiful Father will give it to those that ask him. Aristotle has told us, that "Divine inspiration is to be sought by sacrifices."‡ And it is no less true, that "the faith and understanding of things revealed by Divine inspiration, are to be sought by prayer."‖ Varro tells us, that he wrote first of human, and then of Divine institutions, because societies of men existed first, and the latter were instituted by them. True religion, on the contrary, instead of being instituted by any city or society on earth, hath instituted a city altogether heavenly and Divine, and is itself inspired by God, who is the giver of eternal life, to all that worship him in sincerity.§

It is truly surprising to observe how differently this religion was of old received among men, and what different entertainment it meets with even to this day, though the doctrine has been always the same, though it is still enforced by the same arguments, and has the same difficulties and prejudices to struggle with. When the divine apostle preached in the Areopages at Athens, a great many mocked and ridiculed him: *others said, We will hear thee again of this matter: but certain men clave unto him, and believed.* Acts xvii. 32, 34. And that we may not think this faith, in those who believed, was owing to their uncommon penetration or sagacity on the one hand, or to their weakness and simplicity on the other, of the two mentioned in Scripture, who believed on this occasion, the one was a philosopher, and the other a woman. Now, though, without doubt, human liberty is to be allowed its due weight in this matter, yet, we can not help acknowledging, that *a certain influence or energy*¶ seems to discover itself here.

The basis of religion is faith,—just apprehension or *right notions*** of God, according to Epictetus. St. Ignatius says, "Faith is the

* Θεουργῶ μεταμορφώσει.

† Da mihi fidem, &c., *ut supra.*

* Eodem certe spiritu et credenda et intelligenda sacra scriptura, quo tradita est.

† Qui cathedram habet in cœlo, corde docet in terris.

‡ Τὸ θεόπνευστον ταῖς θυσίαις ζητητέον.

‖ Τὴν τῶν θεοπνεύστων πίστιν καὶ σύνεσιν εὐχαῖς ζητητέον.

§ St. Aug. de Civ. Dei, lib. vi., c. 3.

¶ Θεῖαν τινὰ μοῖραν vel ἐνεργείαν.

** Ὀρθαὶ ὑπολήψεις.



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beginning of life, and love the end of it."* And the words of the apostle are, *He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* So that the giving of a law to man, and the enforcing it with the motives of rewards and punishments, is not inconsistent with the filial and disinterested obedience of a rational creature, even in a state of innocence.

All true and lively faith begets love; and thus, that heavenly light is the vehicle of heat. And as, by this means, true faith has a tendency to the practice of obedience, so, all true obedience depends upon faith, and flows from it. But it also proceeds from love, because faith first produces love, and then works by it. All knowledge of mysteries is vain and of no value, unless it have an influence upon the affections, and thereby, upon the whole conduct of life. The luminaries of heaven are placed on high; but they are so placed, that they may shine, and perform their periods, for the benefit of this earth. Gen. i. 17.

We must first believe, that God is. This truth is written in capital letters on every page of the sacred books of Scripture; for all things that are therein delivered by God, and concerning him, confirm this, and take it for a primary and undoubted principle. But these sacred books acknowledge another universal evidence of this leading truth, and an evidence quite distinct from theirs, to which they refer all, even the most obstinate unbelievers and those that are entirely ignorant of this celestial doctrine, for full conviction. Rom. i. 20. As it is quite plain, that the testimony of the written word will have little or no influence upon men who have not received the least tincture of Divine faith, should any person, disputing with them, reason after this manner—There is a God, because this is asserted in the sacred Scriptures, and their testimony must by all means be believed, because they are the word of God;—an argument of this kind, to be sure, would have no other effect than to expose the person who urged it, to the ridicule of atheists and unbelievers; because it evidently begs the question, and runs into a vicious circle. He, therefore, who would bring over such persons to the faith, must reason after a quite different manner. But let him, on the other hand, who once accepts these books with the submission due to their real dignity and Divine authenticity, receive light and edification from them on every article of faith, and with regard to the whole system of religion in general. Let him, also, in congratulation to their exalted Author, cry out, *With thee, O Lord, is the fountain of life: and in thy light we shall see light.* Psa. xxvi. 9. And let him that desires to be, not only a nominal proficient in theology, but φιλόθεος καὶ θεοδίδακτος—a real *lover of God*, and willing to be taught by him, resolve within himself, above all things, to make this sacred volume his constant study, mixing his reading with frequent and fervent prayer: for if this be omitted, his labor will be altogether in vain, supposing him to be ever so well versed, not only in these books, but also to have all the advantages that can be had from the knowledge of languages, and the assistance of commentators and interpreters. Different men have different views in reading this book. As, in the same field, the ox looks for grass, the hound for a hare, and the stork for a lizard, some fond of critical remarks, pick up nothing but little stones and shells; others run in pursuit of sublime mysteries, giving themselves but very little trouble about the precepts and instructions that are clear and evident, and these plunge themselves into a pit that has no bottom. But the genuine disciples of this true wisdom, are those who make it their daily employment, to purify their hearts by the water of those fountains, and reduce their whole lives to a conformity with this heavenly doctrine. They desire not to know these things, only that they may have the reputation of knowledge, or to be distinguished in the world; but that their souls may be healed, and their steps directed, so that they may be led through the paths of righteousness, to the glorious felicity which is set before them.

The sum of all is, that our felicity lies solely and entirely in that blessed God, who is also the fountain and source of our being; that the only means of our union with him, is true religion; and this, again, consists in our entertaining just notions of God, worshipping him acceptably, and endeavoring after a constant and unwearied obedience to all his commands, according to that most pure and perfect rule laid down in those Divine books which we profess to receive as such. Let us, therefore, have constantly fixed in our minds these words of the psalmist, *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, that walk in the way of the Lord. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. O! that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes.* Ps. cxix. 1-4, 5.

* Ἀρχὴ ζωῆς πίστις, τέλος δὲ ἀγαπή.

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## LECTURE XXI.

### THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES.

Of all the maxims that are naturally written on the heart of man, there is none more certain or more universally known, than THAT GOD IS; concerning which I have given a dissertation some time ago. But of all the secrets and hidden things of nature, which have been the subject of human study and inquiry, there is nothing, by a prodigious odds, so difficult or unsearchable, as to know WHAT HE IS. The saying of St. Augustine concerning time is well known in the schools;

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with how much greater truth might it be said of Him, who is more ancient than time, and "who bade time flow from the beginning,"* That *he hath made darkness his hiding-place, and amidst that darkness dwells in light inaccessible.* Psalm xviii. 11. Which, to our eyes, is to be sure more dark than darkness itself! "O the Divine darkness!" says a great man;† and another, most acutely, "If you divide or cut asunder this darkness, who will shine forth?"‡ When, therefore, we are to speak of him, let us always call to remembrance the admonition which bids us speak *with reverence and fear.* For what can we say that is worthy of him, since man, when he speaks of God, is but a blind person describing light? Yet, blind as we are, there is one thing we may, with great truth, say of that glorious light, and let us frequently repeat it: O when will that blessed day shine forth, which shall deliver the soul from those thick integuments of flesh, that like scales on the eye, obstruct its sight, and shall introduce it into a more full and open view of that primitive, and eternal Light! Perhaps, the properest answer we could give to the question, What is God? would be to observe a most profound silence; or, if we should think proper to give any answer it ought to be something next to this absolute silence: viz. GOD IS; which gives us a higher and better idea of him, than any thing we can either express or conceive.

Theological writers mention three methods whereby men come to some kind of knowledge of God themselves, and communicate that knowledge to others, viz., the way of *negation*, the way of *causation*, and the way of *eminence*. Yet the very terms that are used to express these ways, show what a faint knowledge of the invisible Being is to be attained by them; so that the last two may be justly reduced to the first, and all our knowledge of this kind called *negative*. For, to pretend to give any explanation of the Divine essence as distinct from what we call his attributes, would be a refinement so absurd, that under the appearance of more accurate knowledge, it would betray our ignorance the more. And so unaccountable would it be to attempt any such thing, with regard to the unsearchable majesty of God, that possibly the most towering and exalted genius on earth ought frankly to acknowledge, that we know neither our own essence, nor that of any other creature, even the meanest and most contemptible. Though, in the schools, they distinguish the Divine attributes or excellencies, and that by no means improperly, into communicable and incommunicable; yet we ought so to guard this distinction, as always to remember that those which are called communicable, when applied to God, are not only to be understood in a manner incommunicable and quite peculiar to himself, but also, that in him they are, in reality, infinitely different from those virtues, or rather, in a matter where the disparity of the subjects is so very great, those shadows of virtues that go under the same name either in men or angels. For it is not only true, that all things, in the infinite and eternal Being, are infinite and eternal, but they are also, though in a manner quite inexpressible, HIMSELF. He is good without quality, great without quantity, &c. He is good in such a sense as to be called by the evangelist, the only good Being, Matt. xix. 17. He is also the only wise Being: *To the only wise God*, saith the apostle. 1 Tim. i. 17. And the same apostle tells us, in another place, that *he only hath immortality;* 1 Tim. vi. 16, that is, from his own nature, and not from the will or disposition of another. "If we are considered as joined to, or united with God," says an ancient writer of great note, "we have a being, we live, and in some sort are wise; but if we are compared with God, we have no wisdom at all, nor do we live, or so much as have any existence."* All other things were by him brought out of nothing, in consequence of a free act of his will, by means of his infinite power; so that they may be justly called mere contingencies, and he is the only necessarily existent Being. Nay, he is the only *really existent Being;* τὸ ὄντως ὄν; or as Plotinus expresses, τὸ ὑπερόντως ὄν. Thus, also, the Septuagint speaks of him as the only existent Being, ὁ ὤν. And so also does the heathen poet.† This is likewise implied, in the exalted name Jehovah, which expresses his being, and that he has it from himself; but what that being is, or wherein its essence, so to speak, consists, it does not say; nor if it did, could we at all conceive it. Nay, so far is that name from discovering what his being is, that it plainly insinuates that his existence is hid and covered with a veil. *I am who I am:* or, *I am what I am.* As if he had said, I myself know what I am, but you neither know nor can know it; and if I should declare wherein my being consists, you could not conceive it. He has, however, manifested in his works and in his word, what it is our interest to know, that he is *the Lord God, merciful and gracious, abundant in goodness and truth.*

We call him a most pure Spirit, and mean to say, that he is of a nature entirely incorporeal: yet, this word, in the Greek, and Hebrew, and all other languages, according to its primitive and natural signification, conveys no other idea than that of a *gentle gale*, or wind, which every one knows to be a body, though rarefied to a very great degree: so that, when we speak of that Infinite

* —— Qui tempus ab ævo
Ire jubet. BOETH. Cons. Phil., lib. iii., met. 9.

† Ὦ τὸ θεῖον σκότος.

‡ Ἂν τὸ σκότος τέμῃ, ὁ τὶς ἀναστράπτεται.

* Deo si conjungimur, sumus, vivimus, sapimus; Deo si comparamur, nec sapimus omnino, nec vivimus, imo nec sumus. GREG. MAG. MOR.

† Οὐδὲ τὶς ἐσθ' ἕτερος χωρὶς μεγάλου βασιλῆος.

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Purity, all words fail us; and even when we think of it, all the refinements of the acutest understanding are quite at a stand, and become entirely useless. It is, in every respect, as necessary to acknowledge his eternity as his being; provided that, when we mention the term, God, we mean by it the First Being, supposing that expression to include also his self-existence. This idea of a First and eternal Being is again inseparably connected with an infinite degree of all possible perfection, together with immutability, and absolute perseverance therein. But all these are treated of, at great length, in theological books, whereof you have a very large collection.

In like manner, if we suppose God to be the first of all Beings, we must unavoidably therefrom conclude his unity. As to the ineffable Trinity subsisting in this Unity, a mystery discovered only by the sacred Scriptures, especially in the New Testament, where it is more clearly revealed than in the Old, let others boldly pry into it, if they please, while we receive it with an humble faith, and think it sufficient for us to admire and adore.

The other attributes that used to be mentioned on this subject may be supposed to be perfectly comprehended under the following three, viz., *power*, *wisdom*, and *goodness*: for *holiness*, *justice*, *mercy*, *infinite bounty*, &c., may be, with great propriety, ranked under the general term of *goodness*.

But rather than insist upon metaphysical speculations, let us, while we walk daily in these pleasant fields, be constantly culling fresh and never-fading flowers. "When the psalmist cries out, *Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised, and of his greatness there is no end*, he wanted to show," saith St. Augustine, "how great he is. But how can this be done? Though he repeated, *Great, Great*, the whole day, it would have been to little purpose, for he must have ended at last, because the day would have ended; but his greatness was before the beginning of days, and will reach beyond the end of time."* The poet expresses himself admirably well: "I will praise thee, O blessed God, with my voice, I will praise thee also, with silence. For thou, O inexpressible Father, who canst never be known, understandest the silence of the mind, as well as any words or expressions."†

* Volebat dicere quam magnus sit, sed hoc qui fieri potest? Etsi tota die magnum dicerit, parum esset, finiret enim aliquando, quia, finiretur dies; magnitudo autem illius ante dies, et ultra dies.

† Ὑμνῶ σε μάκαρ,
Καὶ δια φωνᾶς.
Ὑμνῶτε μάκαρ,
Καὶ δια σιγᾶς.
Ὅσα γαρ φωνᾶς
Τόσα και σιγᾶς,
Ἄπεις νοερᾶς.
Πάτερ ἀγνωστε,
Πάτερ ἄῤῥητε.—Syn. Hymno., 4to.

## LECTURE XXII.

### HOW TO REGULATE LIFE ACCORDING TO THE RULES OF RELIGION.

I HAVE now, at different times, addressed myself to you upon several subjects of great importance, and of the utmost necessity; though what I have hitherto said, was only designed as a preface or introduction to what I further proposed. But to attempt to prosecute this design at the very end of the year, would be quite improper, and to little or no purpose: I shall, therefore, altogether forbear entering upon it, and for this time, lay before you a few advices, which may be useful, not only in order to employ to greater advantage the months of vacation that are now at hand, but also the better to regulate your whole lives.

And my first advice shall be, *to avoid too much sleep*, which wastes the morning hours, that are most proper for study, as well as for the exercises of religion, and stupefies and enervates the strength of body and mind. I remember that the famous abbot of Clairvaux, Bernard, when he found the friars sleeping immoderately, used to say, that "they slept like the secular clergy."* And though we do not admit of the severe rules to which the monks subjected themselves, we must at least allow, that the measure and degree of sleep and other bodily refreshments, suitable for a young man devoted to study and devotion, is very far different from that excess in which the common sort of mankind indulge themselves.

Another advice, which is akin to, and nearly connected with, the former, shall be, to observe *temperance in eating and drinking*. For moderation in sleeping, generally follows sobriety in eating and other sensual gratifications; but that thick cloud of vapors that arises from a full stomach must of necessity overwhelm all the animal spirits, and keep them long locked up in an indolent, inactive state. Therefore, the Greeks, not without reason, express these two duties, *to be sober and to be watchful*, indifferently by the same term. And the Apostle Peter, that he might make this connexion more evident, uses, indeed, two words for this purpose; but exhorts to these duties as closely connected together, or rather, as if they were, in some respect, but one, *Be sober, be vigilant*. 1 Pet. v. 8. And in the same epistle, having substituted another word for sobriety, he expresses watchfulness by the same word he had put for sobriety in the other place [Νήψατε]: *Be sober* and *watch*. 1 Pet. iv. 7. Both these dispositions are so applied to the mind, as to include a sober and watchful state of the body and senses; as this is exceeding useful, nay, quite necessary, in order to a correspondent frame of the mind, and that disposition both

* Seculariter dormire

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of body and mind, not only subservient, but also necessary to piety and constancy in prayer: *Be sober and watch unto prayer.* 1 Peter, iv. 7.

When the body is reduced to its lightest and most active state, still, as it is corruptible, it is, to be sure, a burden to the mind. How much more must it be so, when it is depressed with an immoderate load of meat and drink, and, in consequence of this, of sleep! Nor can the mind rouse itself, or use the wings of contemplation and prayer with freedom, when it is overpowered with so heavy a load: nay, neither can it make any remarkable progress in the study of human literature, but will move slowly and embarrassed, be at a stand, like a wheel-carriage in deep clay. The Greeks very justly expressed the virtue we are now recommending, by the term Σωφροσύνη, it being, as your favorite philosopher, Aristotle, observes in his Ethics, the great preservative of the mind. He is certainly a very great enemy to his own understanding, who lives high and indulges himself in luxury. "A fat belly is seldom accompanied with an acute understanding."* Nor is it my intention in this, only to warn you against drunkenness and luxury; I would willingly hope that such an advice would be superfluous to you: but, in this conflict, I would willingly carry you to such a pitch of victory, that, at your ordinary and least delicious meals, you would always stop some degrees within the bounds to which your appetite would carry you. Consider that, as Cato said, "the belly has no ears;"† but it has a mouth, into which a bridle must be put, and therefore I address not myself to it, but to the directing mind that is set over it, which, for that reason, ought to govern the body with all its senses, and curb them at its pleasure. St. Bernard's words are admirable to this purpose. "A prudent mind devoted to God, ought so to act in its body, as the master of a family in his own house. He ought not to suffer his flesh to be, as Solomon expresses it, like a brawling woman, nor any carnal appetite to act like a rebellious servant; but to inure them to obedience and patience. He must not have his senses for his guides, but bring them into subjection and subserviency to reason and religion. He must, by all means, have his house and family so ordered and well disciplined, that he can say to one, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh, and to his servant the body, Do this, and it doeth what it is bid without murmuring. The body must also be treated with a little hardship, that it may not be disobedient to the mind."‡ For he, saith Solomon, *that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child, shall have him become a (rebellious) son at last.* Prov. xxix. 21. This is what I would have you aspire to, a conquest over your flesh, and all its lusts; for they carry on a deadly war against your souls, and their desires are then most to be resisted, when they flatter most. What an unhappy and dishonorable inversion of nature is it, when the flesh commands, and the mind is in subjection; when the flesh, which is vile, gross, earthly, and soon to be the food of worms, governs the soul, that is the breath of God!

Another thing I would have you beware of, is, *immoderate speech.* The evils of the tongue are many: but the shortest way to find a way for them all, is, to study silence, and avoid, as the poet expresses it, "excessive prating, and a vast desire of speaking."*

He is a perfect man, as the Apostle James expresses it, *who offends not in word.* James iii. 2. And therefore, doubtless, he that speaks least, offends in this respect more rarely. But, *in the multitude of words,* as the wise man observes, *there wants not sin.* Proverbs x. 19. To speak much, and also to the purpose, seldom falls to the share of one man.† Now, that we may avoid loquacity, we must love solitude, and render it familiar, that so every one may have an opportunity to speak much to himself, and little to other people. "We must, to be sure," says à Kempis, "be in charity with all men; but it is not expedient to be familiar with every one."‡ General and indiscriminate conversation with every one we meet, is a mean and silly thing. Even when we promise ourselves comfort and satisfaction from free conversation, we often return from such interviews with uneasiness; or, at least, have spoken and heard such things as, upon serious reflection, may justly give us concern.

But, if we would secure our tongues and senses, or keep safe our hearts and all the issues of life, we must be frequent at prayer, in the morning, at noon, and at night, or oftener throughout the day, and continually walk as in the presence of God; always remembering that he observes not only our words and actions, but also takes notice of our most secret thoughts. This is the sum and substance of true piety; for he who is always sensible that that pure and all-seeing Eye is continually upon him, will never venture to sin with set purpose, or full consent of mind. This sense of the Divine presence would certainly make our life on this earth like that of the angels; for, according to our Lord's expres-

* Παχεῖα λαγὴρ γαστὴρ οὐ τίκτει νόον.

† Ventrem non habere aures.

‡ Sic prudens et Deo dicatus animus habere se debet in corpore suo, sicut pater-familias in domo sua. Non habeat, sicut Solomon dicit, mulierem litigiosam carnem suam, nec ullum appetitum carnis ut servum rebellum, sed ad obedientiam et patientiam assuefactum. Habeat sensus suos non duces, sed rationi et religioni servientes et sequaces; habeat omnem omnino domum vel familiam suam sic ordinatam, et disciplinæ subditam, ut dicat huic, Vade, et vadat, et alii, Veni, et veniat, et servo corpori, Facito hoc, et sine murmure fiat quod jubetur; et paulo certe durius tractandum est corpus, ne animo male pareat.

* Improba garrulitas, studiumque immane loquendi

† Χωρὶς τὸ τ' εἰπεῖν πόλλα καὶ τὰ καίρια.

‡ Charitas certe habenda est erga omnes, sed familiaritas non expedit.

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sion, it is their peculiar advantage, *continually to behold the face of our Father who is in heaven.* By this means, Joseph escaped the snares laid for him by an imperious mistress; and, as if he had thrown water upon it, extinguished that fiery dart with this seasonable reflection: *Shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* Genesis xxxix. 9. He might have escaped the eyes of men, but he stood in awe of that Invisible Eye from which nothing can be hid. We read of a good man of old, who got the better of a temptation of the same kind, by the same serious consideration; for, being carried from one chamber to another by the woman that tempted him, he still demanded a place of greater secrecy, till having brought him to the most retired place of the whole house, "Here," said she, "no person will find us out, no eye can see us." To this he answered, "Will no eye see? will not that of God perceive us?" By which saying, he himself escaped the snare, and, by the influence of Divine grace, brought the sinful woman to repentance. But now,

*Let us pray.*

PRAISE waits for thee, O Lord, in Zion; and to be employed in paying thee that tribute is a becoming and pleasant exercise. It is due to thee from all the works of thy hands, but particularly proper from thy saints and celestial spirits. Elevate, O Lord, our minds, that they may not grovel on the earth, and plunge themselves in the mire; but, being carried upward, may taste the pleasures of thy house, that exalted house of thine, the inhabitants whereof are continually singing thy praises. Their praises add nothing to thee; but they themselves are perfectly happy therein, while they behold thy boundless goodness without any veil, admire thy uncreated beauty, and celebrate the praises thereof throughout all ages. Grant us, that we may walk in the paths of holiness, and, according to our measure, exalt thy name even on this earth, until we also be translated into the glorious assembly of those who serve thee in thy higher house.

Remember thy goodness and thy covenant to thy church militant upon this earth, and exposed to dangers amid so many enemies; yet we believe that, notwithstanding all these dangers, it will be safe at last: it may be distressed, and plunged in the waters, but it can not be quite overwhelmed, or finally perish. Pour out thy blessings upon this our nation, our city, and university. We depend upon thee, O Father, without whose hand we should not have been, and without whose favor we can never be happy. Inspire our hearts with gladness, thou who alone art the fountain of solid, pure, and permanent joy; and lead us, by the paths of righteousness and grace, to the rest and light of glory, for the sake of thy Son, our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Amen.

## LECTURE XXIII.

### PURITY OF LIFE.

IN every act of religious worship, what a great advantage would it be, to remember that saying of our great Master, which nobody is altogether ignorant of, and yet scarcely any know as they ought: "That God, whom *we worship*, is a spirit, and therefore to be worshipped in spirit and in truth."* He is a spirit, a most pure spirit, and the Father of spirits: he is truth, primitive truth, and the most pure fountain of all truth: "But we all have erred in heart."† We are indeed spirits, but spirits immersed in flesh; nay, as it were, converted into flesh, and, the light of truth being extinguished within us, quite involved in the darkness of error: and what still sets us in greater opposition to the truth, everything about us is false and delusive: "There is no soundness."‡ How improper, therefore, are we, who are *deceitful* and *carnal*,‖ to worship that Spirit of supreme truth! Though we pray, and fast often, yet all our sacrifices, as they are polluted by the impure hands wherewith we offer them, must be offensive, and unacceptable to God: and the more they are multiplied, the more the pure and spotless Deity must complain of them, as the grievance is thereby enhanced. Thus, by his prophet, he complained of his people of old: "Your new moons," saith he, "and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth: they are a trouble to me; I am weary to bear them; therefore, when you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you, and, as it were, turn my back upon you with disdain: but if you will wash you, and make you clean, then come and let us reason together:"§ as if he had said, "Then let us converse together, and if there be any difference between us, let us talk over the matter, and settle it in a friendly manner, that our complaints may be turned into mutual embraces, and all your sins being freely and fully forgiven, you may be restored to perfect innocence."—"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be redder than crimson, they shall be whiter than wool; wash yourselves, and I will also wash you, and most completely wipe away all your stains."

But that we may be the better provided for this useful and altogether necessary exercise of cleansing our hearts and ways, and apply to it with the greater vigor, let us dwell a little upon that sacred expression in the Psalms, "Wherewith shall a young man purify his way?" The answer is, "By taking heed thereto according to thy word."¶ In this ques-

* John iv. 24.
† Ἡμεῖς δὲ πολλοὶ καρδίᾳ πλανώμενοι.
‡ Οὐδὲν ὑγιές.
‖ Σάρκινοι καὶ ψεύσται.
§ Isaiah i. 14—16, 18.
¶ Psalm cxix. 9.

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tion, several things offer themselves to our observation.

1. That, *without controversy*,* purity of life, or conversation, is a most beautiful and desirable attainment, and that it must, by all means, begin at the very fountain, that is, the heart; whence, as Solomon observes, "proceed the issues of life." In the beginning of the Psalm, they are pronounced blessed "who are pure, or undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord." And, in another place, "Truly, God is good to Israel," says the psalmist, "even to such as are of a clean heart."† And the words of our Savior to this purpose are, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."‡ Nor is the true and genuine beauty of the soul anything distinct from this purity and sanctity; this is the true image of its great Creator; that golden crown which most unhappily dropped off the head of man, when he fell: so that, with the greatest justice, we may lament and say, "Woe unto us that we have sinned!" And it is the general design and intention of all religion, all its mysteries, and all its precepts, that this crown may be again restored, at least to some part of the human race, and this image again stamped upon them; which image, when fully completed, and for ever confirmed, will certainly constitute a great part of that happiness we now hope for, and aspire after. Then, we trust, we shall attain to a more full conformity and resemblance to our beloved Head. And, even in this wayfaring state, the more deeply and thoroughly our souls are tinctured with the divine flame of charity, joined with this beautiful purity, the more we resemble him who is *white and ruddy, and fairer than the sons of men.* The Father of mercies has made choice of us, that we may be holy; the Son of God, blessed for ever, has once for all shed his blood upon earth, in order to purify us, and daily pours out his Spirit from heaven upon us, for the same purpose.

But to consider the matter, as it is in itself, where is the person that does not, even by the force of natural instinct, disdain filth and nastiness, or at least prefer to it purity and neatness of body? Now, as the soul greatly excels the body, so much the more desirable is it, that it should be found in a state of beauty and purity. In like manner, were we to travel a journey, who would not prefer a plain and clean way to one that were rough and dirty? But the way of life, which is not the case in other matters, will be altogether such as you would have it or choose to make it. With God's assistance, and the influence of his grace, a good man is at pains to purify his own way; but men of an impure and beastly disposition, who delight to wallow in the mire, may always easily obtain their sordid wish. But I hope that you, disdaining such a brutish indignity, will, in preference to everything else, give your most serious attention to this inquiry, by what means even young men and boys may purify their way, and, avoiding the dirty paths of the common sort of mankind, walk in such as are more pleasant and agreeable.

2. Observe, that purity is not such an easy matter that it may fall by chance in the way of those that are not in quest of it, but a work of great art and industry. Hence you may also learn, that the way, even of young men or boys,* stands very much in need of this careful attention. It is indeed true, that, in some respect, the reformation of youth is easier and sooner accomplished, in that they are not accustomed to shameful and wicked ways, nor confirmed in sinful habits: but there are other regards wherein it is more difficult to reduce that period of life to purity, particularly as it is more strongly impressed with the outward objects that surround it, and easily disposed to imbibe the very worst: the examples and incitements to vice beset youth in greater abundance, and those of that age are more apt to fall in with them.

But whatever may be said of the easiness or difficulty of reforming youth and childhood, it is evident from the question, which, without doubt, is proposed with wisdom and seriousness, that this matter is within the verge of possibility, and of the number of such as are fit to be attempted. Youth is not so headstrong, nor childhood so foolish, but by proper means they can be bent and formed to virtue and piety. Notwithstanding the irregular desires and forwardness of youth, and that madness whereby they are hurried to forbidden enjoyments, there are words and expressions that can sooth this impetuosity, even such, that by them youth can tame and compose itself, *By attending to itself and its ways, according to thy word:* that matchless word, which contains all those particular words and expressions, not only that are proper to purify and quiet all the motions and affections of the soul, but also, by a certain Divine power, are wonderfully efficacious for that purpose. And what was said of old concerning Sparta and its discipline, may be, with much greater truth, asserted of the Divine law and true religion, *viz.*, that it had a surprising power to *tame and subdue mankind.*† And this leads us directly to the answer of the question in the text: *By attending thereto according to thy word.*

This is not, therefore, to be done according to our philosophy, but *according to thy word*, O eternal Light, Truth, and Purity! The philosophy of the heathens, it is true, contains some moral instructions and precepts that are by no means despicable; but this is only so far as they are agreeable to the word of God and the Divine law, though the philosophers themselves knew nothing of it.

* Ὁμολογουμένως.
† Psalm lxxiii. 1. ‡ Matt. v. 8.

* The Hebrew word used in the text, properly signifies a boy.
† Δαμασίμβροτον.

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But the only perfect system of moral philosophy, that ought to be universally received, is the doctrine of Christianity. This the ancient fathers of the primitive church have asserted, and fully proved, to the honor of our religion. But those who spend their lives in the study of philosophy can neither reform themselves nor others, if nature be but a little obstinate; and their wisdom, when it does its utmost, rather conceals vices, than eradicates them; but the Divine precepts make so great a change upon the man, and, subduing his old habits, so reform him, that you would not know him to be the same. If any of you, then, aspire to this purity of mind and way, you must, with all possible care, conform yourself, and everything about you, to the instructions and precepts of this Divine word. Nor think this a hard saying; for the study of purity has nothing in it that is unpleasant or disagreeable, unless you think it a grievance to become like unto God.

Consider now, young men, nay, you who, without offence, will suffer yourselves to be called boys: consider, I say, wherein consists that true wisdom which deserves to be pursued with the most earnest study and application, and whereby, if you will, you may far exceed those that are your superiors in years. Be ambitious to attain the advantage mentioned in the text, and consequently the condition upon which it depends, for they are inseparably connected together. Reconcile your minds to a strict attention to your ways, according to the Divine word; and by this means (which is a very rare attainment), you will reconcile youth, and even childhood, to the purity here recommended. Account the Divine word and precepts preferable to your daily food; yea, let them be dearer to you than your eyes, and even than life itself.

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## LECTURE XXIV.

### BEFORE THE COMMUNION.

It is the advice of the wise man, "Dwell at home," or, with yourself; and though there are very few that do this, yet it is surprising that the greatest part of mankind can not be prevailed upon, at least to visit themselves sometimes; but, according to the saying of the wise Solomon, *The eyes of the fool are in the ends of the earth.* It is the peculiar property of the human mind, and its signal privilege, to reflect upon itself; yet we, foolishly neglecting this most valuable gift conferred upon us by our Creator, and the great ornament of our nature, spend our lives in a brutish thoughtlessness. Were a man not only to turn in upon himself, carefully to search and examine his own heart, and daily endeavor to improve it more and more in purity, but also to excite others with whom he conversed, to this laudable practice, by seasonable advice and affecting exhortations, he would certainly think himself very happy in these exercises. Now, though this expedient is never unseasonable, yet, it will be particularly proper on such an occasion as this, to try it upon yourselves; as you are not ignorant, that it is the great apostolical rule with respect to all who are called to celebrate the Divine mysteries. *Let every man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.* 1 Cor. xi. 28.

I do not here intend a full explication of this mystery, but only to put you in mind, that, in order to a saving use and participation thereof, a twofold judgment must of necessity be formed; the first with respect to our own souls, and the other, to that of the Lord's body. These the apostle considers as closely connected together, and therefore expresses both by the same word. The trial we are to make of ourselves is indeed expressed by the word δοκιμάζειν, which signifies to *prove* or to *try;* but immediately after, he expresses it by judging ourselves [Εἰ γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς διεκρίνομεν]; *For if we should judge ourselves,* &c. Whereas, in the preceding verses, he had mentioned the other judgment to be formed, and expressed it by the same word [διακρίνειν], which signifies to *judge* or *discern:* [Μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Κυρίου.] *Not discerning the Lord's body.* And this is that which renders a vast many unworthy of so great an honor; they approach this heavenly feast without forming a right judgment either of themselves or of it. But, that we form a judgment of ourselves, it is necessary that we first bring ourselves to an impartial trial: and, to be sure, I should much rather advise you to this inward self-examination, and heartily wish I could persuade you to it, than that you should content yourselves with a lifeless trial of your memory, by repeating compositions on this subject.

Consider with yourselves, I pray, and think seriously, what madness, what unaccountable folly it is, to trifle with the majesty of the Most High God, and to offer to infinite Wisdom the sacrifices of distraction and folly? Shall we who are but insignificant worms, thus *provoke the almighty King to jealousy,* as if we were *stronger than he,* and of purpose run our heads, as it were, against that Power, the slightest touch whereof would crush us to dust? Do we not know, that the same God who is an enlivening and saving light to all that worship with humble piety, is, nevertheless, *a consuming fire* to all the impious and profane, who pollute his sacrifices with impure hearts and unclean hands? And that those especially who have been employed in his church, and in the Divine offices, yet have not experienced his influence as a pure and shining light, will unavoidably feel him as a flaming fire? Let his saints rejoice and exult before God, for

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this he not only allows, but even commands: yet, let even those of them who have made the greatest advances in holiness, remember, that this holy and spiritual joy is to be joined with holy fear and trembling: nay, the greater progress they have made in holiness, the more deeply will they feel this impressed upon their minds, so that they can by no means forget it, "The great Eye is over us, let us be afraid."* Great is our God, and holy: even the angels worship him. Let his saints approach him, but with humility and fear; but as for the slothful and those that are immersed in guilt, who securely and with pleasure indulge themselves in impure affections, let them not dare to come near. Yet if there are any, let their guilt and pollution be ever so great, who find arising within them a hearty aversion to their own impurity, and an earnest desire after holiness; behold, there is opened for you a living and pure fountain, most effectual for cleansing and washing away all sorts of stains, as well as for refreshing languishing and thirsty souls. And he who is the living and never-failing fountain of purity and grace, encourages, calls, and exhorts you to come to him. *Come unto me, all ye that are athirst,* &c. And again, *All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me; and him that cometh unto me, I will by no means reject or cast out.* John vi. 37.

Ask yourselves, therefore, what you would be at, and with what dispositions you come to this most sacred table. Say, Whither art thou going, and what seekest thou, O my soul? For it would be an instance of the most extravagant sloth and folly, to set about a matter of so great importance, and so serious, without any end, without the prospect of any advantage, and therefore without any serious turn of mind, or as one doing nothing. Yet this is the case of vast numbers that meet together in Divine assemblies, and at this holy sacrament. Is it any wonder that those should find nothing, who absolutely have nothing in view; and that he who is bound for no harbor, should meet with no favorable wind? They give themselves up to the torrent of custom, and steer not their course to any particular port, but fluctuate and know not whither they are carried; or, if they are alarmed with any sting of conscience, it is only a kind of inconsiderate and irregular motion, and reaches no farther than the exterior surface of sacred institutions. But as for you, who, according to the expression of the angels, *seek Jesus, fear not;* you will certainly find him, and in him all things. *For it hath pleased the Father, that in him all fulness shall dwell.* Col. i. 10. So that in him there is no vacuity and without him, nothing else but emptiness and vanity. Let us embrace him, therefore, with our whole hearts, and on him alone let us depend and rely.

Let his death, which we commemorate by this mystery, extinguish in us all worldly affections. May we feel his Divine power working us into a conformity to his sacred image; and having our strength, as it were, renewed by his means, let us travel toward our heavenly country, constantly following him with a resolute and accelerated pace.

The concern of purifying the heart in good earnest, taking proper measures for conforming the life to the rules of the gospel, is equally incumbent upon all. For this is the great and true design of all Divine worship, and of all religious institutions; though the greater part of mankind satisfy themselves with the outward surface of them, and therefore catch nothing but shadows in religion itself, as well as in the other concerns of life. We have public prayers and solemn sacraments: yet, if amid all these, one should look for the true and lively characters of Christian faith, or in the vast numbers that attend these institutions, he should search for those that, in the course of their lives, approve themselves the true followers of their great Master, he would find reason to compare them to a "few persons swimming at a great distance from one another, in a vast ocean."*

It has been observed long ago by one, "that in Rome itself he had found nothing of Rome;"† which with too great truth might be applied to religion, about which we make so great a bustle at present; there is scarcely anything at all of religion in it, unless we imagine that religion consists of words, as a grove does of trees. For, if we suppose it lies in the mortification of sin, unfeigned humility, brotherly charity, and a noble contempt of the world and the flesh, whither has it gone and left us? As for you, young gentlemen, if you would apply to this matter in good earnest, you must, of necessity, bestow some time and pains upon it, and not fondly dream that such great advantages can be met with by chance, or in consequence of a negligent and superficial inquiry. If we are to alter the course of our life for the time to come, we must look narrowly into our conduct during the preceding part of it; for the measures to be taken for the future are, in a great degree, suggested by what is past. He acts wisely, and is a happy man, who frequently, nay, daily reviews his words and actions; because he will doubtless perform the same duty with greater ease, and to better purpose, when he is called to it with more than ordinary solemnity. And, therefore, they who have experienced how pleasant this work is, and what a mixture of utility is joined with this pleasure, will apply to it with a cheerful mind, whenever opportunity requires it. As to others, they must of necessity set about it some time or other: I say of necessity, if I am allowed to say it is necessary to avoid the wrath to come, and to

* Ὄμμα μέγα τρομεῶμεν.

* Apparent rari nantes in gurgite vasto.

† Se in Româ, Romæ nihil invenisse.



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obtain peace and salvation. Repentance may possibly appear a laborious and unpleasant work to our indolence, and *to repent*, may seem a harsh expression: *to perish*, however, is still more harsh; but a sinful man has no other choice. Our Lord, who is truth itself, being acquainted with the cruel execution performed by Herod upon the Galileans, takes this opportunity to declare to his hearers, that *unless they repented, they should all likewise perish.* Luke xiii. 3. The Savior of the world, it is true, came for this very purpose, that he might save those that were miserable and lost, from the fatal necessity of being utterly undone; but he never intended to take away the happy and pleasant necessity of repentance: nay, he strengthened the obligation to it, and imposed it as a duty inseparably connected with grace and happiness. And this connexion, he not only preached in expressions to the same purpose with his forerunner, John the Baptist, but even in the very same words: *Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* Matt. iv. 7. And in another place, having told us that he came *not to call the righteous, but sinners,* Matt ix. 13, he immediately adds, to what he called those sinners; not to a liberty of indulging themselves in sin, but from sin *to repentance.* His blood which was shed on the cross is indeed a balsam more precious than all the balm of Gilead and Arabia, and all the ointments of the whole world; but it is solely intended for curing the contrite in heart.

But alas! that gross ignorance of God that overclouds our mind is the great and the unhappy cause of all the guilt we have contracted, and of that impenitence which engages us to continue in it. Had men but the least knowledge how disagreeable and hateful all sinful pollution renders us to his eternal and infinite purity; and, on the other hand, what a likeness to him we attain by holiness, and how amiable we are thereby rendered in his sight; they would look upon this as the only valuable attainment, they would pursue it with the most vigorous efforts of their minds, and would make it their constant study day and night; that, according to the divine advice of the apostle, being *cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,* they might *perfect holiness in the fear of God.* 2 Cor. vii. 9.

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# AN EXHORTATION TO THE STUDENTS,

## UPON THEIR RETURN TO THE UNIVERSITY AFTER THE VACATION

We are at last returned, and some are for the first time brought hither by that Supreme Hand which holds the reins of this vast universe, which rules the stormy winds and swelling sea, and distributes peace and war to nations according to its pleasure. The great Lord of the universe, and Father of mankind, while he rules the world with absolute sway, does not despise this little flock, provided we look up unto him, and humbly pray that we may feel the favorable effects of his presence and bounty: nay, he will not disdain to dwell within us, and in our hearts, unless we, through folly, and ignorance of our true happiness, shut the door against him when he offers to come in. He is the Most High, yet has chosen the humble heart for the most agreeable place of his residence on this earth: but the proud and haughty, who look with disdain on their inferiors, he, on his part, despises, and *beholds,* as it were, *afar off.* He is most holy, and dwells in no hearts but such as are purged from the dross of earthly affections; and that these may be holy, and really capable of receiving his sacred Majesty, they must, of necessity, be purified. *Know ye not,* says the divine apostle, *that you, even your bodies, are the temples of the Holy Ghost,* and therefore are to be preserved pure and holy? 1 Cor. vi. 19. But the mind that dwells within them must be still more holy, as being the priest that, with constant and unwearied piety, offers up the sacrifices and sweet incense of pious affections, cheerful obedience, ardent prayers, and divine praises, to the Deity of that temple.

Of your studies and exotic learning, I intend not to say much. The knowledge, I own, that men of letters, who are the most indefatigable in study, and have the advantage of the greatest abilities, can possibly attain to, is at best but very small. But since the knowledge of languages and sciences however inconsiderable it may be, is the business of this society of ours, and of that period of years you are to pass here, let us do, I pray, as the Hebrews express it, "the work of the day while the day lasts;"* "for time slips silently away, and every succeeding hour is attended with greater disadvantages than that which went before it."†

Study to acquire such a philosophy as is not barren and babbling, but solid and true;

* Opus diei in die suo.

† Tempus nam tacitum subruit, horaque
Semper præteritâ deterior subit.

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not such a one as floats upon the surface of endless verbal controversies, but one that enters into the nature of things: for he spoke good sense, who said, "The philosophy of the Greeks was a mere jargon and noise of words."*

You who are engaged in philosophical inquiries ought to remember, in the meanwhile, that you are not so strictly confined to that study, but you may, at the same time, become proficients in elocution; and, indeed, it is proper you should. I would therefore have you to apply to both these studies with equal attention, that so you may not only attain some knowledge of nature, but also be in condition to communicate your sentiments with ease, upon those subjects you understand, and clothe your thoughts with words and expressions; without which, all your knowledge will differ but very little from buried ignorance.

In joining these two studies together, you have not only reason for your guide, but also Aristotle himself for your example; for we are told, that it was his custom to walk up and down in the school in the morning, teaching philosophy, particularly those speculative and more obscure points which in that age were called *rationes acroamaticæ;* and thus he was employed till the hour appointed for anointing, and going to exercise;† but, after dinner, he applied to the more entertaining arts of persuasion, and made his scholars declaim upon such subjects as he appointed them.

But to return to my own province: for, to say the truth, I reckon all other things foreign to my purpose; whatever you do with regard to other studies, give always the preference to sacred Christian philosophy, which is, indeed, the chief philosophy, and has the pre-eminence over every other science, because it holds Christ to be *the Head,‡ in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid.* Col. ii. 3, 9. This, the apostle tells us, was not the case of those false Christians in his time, whose philosophy regarded only some idle superstitions and vain observations. Cultivate, therefore, I say, this sacred wisdom sent down from heaven. Let this be your main study; for its mysteries are the most profound, its precepts the most pure, and, at the same time, the most pleasant. In this study, a weak understanding will be no disadvantage, if you have but a willing mind and ardent desires. Here, if anywhere, the observation holds, that "if you love learning, you can not fail to make great progress therein."‖ For some who have applied with great industry to human philosophy, have found it to be like a disdainful mistress, and lost their labor; but Divine philosophy invites and encourages even those of the meanest parts.

And, indeed, it may be no small comfort and relief to young men of slow capacities, who make but little progress in human sciences, even when they apply to them with the most excessive labor and diligence, that this heavenly doctrine, though it be the most exalted in its own nature, is not only accessible to those of the lowest and meanest parts, but they are cheerfully admitted to it, graciously received, preferred to those that are proud of their learning, and very often advanced to higher degrees of knowledge therein; according to that of the psalmist, *The law of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the entrance of his word giveth light; it giveth also understanding unto the simple.* Psalm cxix. 130. You, therefore, whom some very forward youths leave far behind in other studies, take courage; and to wipe off this stain, if it be one, and compensate this discouragement, make this your refuge: you can not possibly arrive at an equal pitch of eloquence or philosophy with some others, but what hinders you, I pray, from being as pious, as modest, as meek and humble, as holy and pure in heart, as any other person whatever? And by this means, in a very short time, you will be completely happy in the enjoyment of God, and live for ever in the blessed society of angels and spirits of just men made perfect.

But if you want to make a happy progress in this wisdom, you must, to be sure, declare war against all the lusts of the world and the flesh, which enervate your minds, weaken your strength, and deprive you of all disposition and fitness for imbibing this pure and immaculate doctrine. How stupid is it to catch so greedily at advantages so vanishing and fleeting in their nature, if, indeed, they can be called advantages at all; "advantages that are carried hither and thither, hurried from place to place by the uncertainty of their nature, and often fly away before they can be possessed."* An author remarkable for his attainments in religion, justly cries out, "O! what peace and tranquillity might he possess who could be prevailed upon to cut off all vain anxiety, and think only of those things that are of a Divine and saving nature!"† Peace and tranquillity is, without doubt, what we all seek after, yet, there are very few that know the way to it, though it be quite plain and open. It is, indeed, no wonder that the blind who wander about without a guide, should mistake the plainest and most open path: but we have an infallible guide, and a most valiant leader. Let us follow him alone; for he that treadeth in his steps, can never walk in darkness.

* Φιλοσοφια Ἑλλήνων λόγων ψοφος.
† Μεχρι τοῦ ἀλείματος.
‡ Ὦ κεφαλην κράτεῖ.
‖ Ἐαν ἡς φιλόμαθης, ἔση πολυμαθής.—ISOC. AD DEM.

* Τὰ ἄνω καὶ κάτω φερόμενα, καὶ περιτρεπόμενα, καὶ πρὶν ληφθῆναι, ἀπιοντα.
† O qui omnem vanam solicitudinem amputaret, et salutaria duntaxat ac divina cogitaret, quantam quietem et pacem possideret!

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*Let us pray.*

O! INVINCIBLE God, who seest all things! Eternal Light, before whom all darkness is light, and in comparison with whom, every other light is but darkness! The weak eyes of our understanding can not bear the open and full rays of thy inaccessible light; and yet, without some glimpses of that light from heaven, we can never direct our steps, nor proceed toward that country which is the habitation of light. May it therefore please thee, O Father of Lights, to send forth thy light and thy truth, that they may lead us directly to thy holy mountain. Thou art good, and the fountain of goodness; give us understanding, that we may keep thy precepts. That part of our past lives, which we have lost in pursuing shadows, is enough, and, indeed, too much: bring back our souls into the paths of life, and let the wonderful sweetness thereof, which far exceeds all the pleasures of this earth, powerfully, yet pleasantly, preserve us from being drawn aside therefrom by any temptation from sin or the world. Purify, we pray thee, our souls from all impure imaginations, that thy most beautiful and holy image may be again renewed within us, and, by contemplating thy glorious perfections, we may feel daily improved within us that Divine similitude, the perfection whereof we hope will at last make us for ever happy in that full and beatific vision we aspire after. Till this most blessed day break, and the shadows fly away, let thy Spirit be continually with us, and may we feel the powerful effects of his Divine grace constantly directing and supporting our steps; that all our endeavors, not only in this society, but throughout the whole remaining part of our lives, may serve to promote the honor of thy blessed name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

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# EXHORTATIONS

## TO THE CANDIDATES FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS, IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

### EXHORTATION I.

WERE I allowed to speak freely what I sincerely think of most of the affairs of human life, even those that are accounted of the highest importance, and transacted with the greatest eagerness and bustle, I should be apt to say, *Magno conatu magnas nugas*—that a great noise is made about trifles. But if you should take this amiss, as a little unseasonable upon the present occasion, and an insult upon your solemnity, I hope you will the more easily forgive me, that I place in the same rank with this philosophical convention of yours, the most famous councils and general assemblies of princes and great men; and say of their golden crowns, as well as your crowns of laurel, that they are Καινοῦ σκιας οὐκ αν πριάμην—things of no value, and not worth the purchasing. Even the triumphal, inaugural, or nuptial processions of the greatest kings and generals of armies, with whatever pomp and magnificence, as well as art, they may be set off, they are, after all, so far true representations of their false, painted, and tinsel happiness, that, while we look at them, they fly away; and, in a very short time, they are followed by their funeral processions, which are the triumphs of death over those who have, themselves, triumphed during their lives. The scenes are shifted, the actors also disappear; and, in the same manner, the greatest shows of this vain world likewise pass away. Let us, that we may lop off the luxuriant branches of our vines, take a nearer view of this object, and remember that what we now call a laurel crown, will soon be followed by cypress wreaths. It will be also proper to consider how many, who, in their time, were employed as we are now, have long ago acted their parts, and are now consigned to a long oblivion: as also, what vast numbers of the rising generation are following us at the heels, and, as it were, pushing us forward to the same land of forgetfulness! who, while they are hurrying us away, are, at the same time, hastening thither themselves. All that we see, all that we do, and all that we are, are but mere dreams; and if we are not sensible of this truth, it is because we are still asleep: none but minds that are awake can discern it; they, and they only, can perceive and despise these ἐμπαίγματα—*illusions* of the night. In the meantime, nothing hinders us from submitting to these, and other such customary formalities, provided our doing it interfere not with matters of much greater importance, and prospects of a different and more exalted nature. What is it, pray, to which with the most ardent wishes you have been aspiring throughout the whole course of these last four years? Here you have a cap and a title and nothing at all more.

But perhaps taking this amiss, you secretly blame me in your hearts, and wish me to congratulate you upon the honor you have obtained. I cheerfully comply with your desire, and am willing to explain myself. These small presents are not the principal reward of your labors, nor the chief end of your stud-

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ties; but honorary marks and badges of that erudition and knowledge wherewith your minds have been stored by the uninterrupted labors of four whole years. But whatever attainments in learning you have reached, I would have you seriously to reflect, how inconsiderable they are, and how little they differ from nothing. Nay, if what we know, is compared with what we know not, it will be found even vastly less than nothing: at least, it is an argument of little knowledge, and the sign of a vain and weak mind, to be puffed up with an overbearing opinion of our own knowledge; while, on the contrary, it is an evidence of a great proficiency in knowledge, to be sensible of our ignorance and inability. "He is the wisest man," says Plato, "who knows himself to be very ill qualified for the attainment of wisdom."* Whatever be in this, we often find the sciences and arts which you cultivate, to be useless and entirely barren, with regard to the advantages of life; and, generally speaking, those other professions that are illiterate and illiberal, nay, even unlawful, meet with better treatment, and greater encouragement than what we call the liberal arts. "He that ventures upon the sea, is enriched by his voyage: he that engages in war, glitters with gold; the mean parasite lies drunk on a rich bed; and even he who endeavors to corrupt married women is rewarded for his villany: learning alone starves in tattered rags, and invokes the abandoned arts in vain."†

But, as sometimes the learned meet with a better fate, you, young gentlemen, I imagine, entertain better hopes with regard to your fortune, nor would I discourage them; yet, I would gladly moderate them a little by this wholesome advice: lean not upon a broken reed, neither let any one who values his peace, his real dignity, and his satisfaction, give himself up to hopes that are uncertain, fra'l, and deceitful. The human race are, perhaps, the only creatures that by this means become a torment to themselves: for, as we always grasp at futurity, we vainly promise ourselves many and great things, in which, as commonly happens, being for the most part disappointed, we must, of necessity, pay for our foolish pleasure with a proportionate degree of pain. Thus, the greatest part of mankind find the whole of this wretched life chequered with delusive joys and real torments, ill-grounded hopes and fears, equally imaginary; amid these, we live in continual suspense, and die so too.

But a few, alas! a few only, yet some, who think more justly, having set their hearts upon heavenly enjoyments, take pleasure in despising with a proper greatness of mind, and trampling upon the fading enjoyments of this world. These make it their only study, and exert their utmost efforts, that, having the more Divine part of their composition weaned from the world and the flesh, they may be brought to a resemblance and union with the holy and supreme God, the Father of spirits, by purity, piety, and an habitual contemplation of Divine objects. And this, to be sure, is the principal thing, with a noble ambition whereof I would have your minds inflamed; and whatever profession or manner of life you devote yourselves to, it is my earnest exhortation and request, that you would make this your constant and principal study. Fly, if you have any regard to my advice, fly far from that controversial, contentious school-divinity, which, in fact, consists in fruitless disputes about words, and rather deserves the name of vain and foolish talking.

Almost all mankind are constantly catching at something more than they possess, and torment themselves in vain. Nor is our rest to be found among these enjoyments of the world, where all things are covered with a deluge of vanity, as with a flood of fluctuating, restless waters; and the soul flying about, looking in vain for a place on which it may set its foot, most unhappily loses its time, its labor, and itself at last; like the birds in the days of the flood, which "having long sought for land, till their strength was quite exhausted, fell down at last, and perished in the waters."*

O! how greatly preferable to these bushes, and briers, and thorns, are the delightful fields of the gospel, wherein pleasure and profit are agreeably mixed together, whence you may learn the way to everlasting peace; that poverty of spirit which is the only true riches, that purity of heart which is our greatest beauty, and that inexpressible satisfaction which attends the exercise of charity, humility, and meekness! When your minds are stored and adorned with these graces, they will enjoy the most pleasant tranquillity, even amid the noise and tumults of this present life; and you will be, to use the words of Tertullian, *candidates for eternity;* a title infinitely more glorious and sublime than what has been this day conferred upon you. And that great and last day, which is so much dreaded by the slaves of this present world, will be the most happy and auspicious to you; as it will deliver you from a dark, dismal prison, and place you in the regions of the most full and marvellous light.

*Let us pray.*

MOST exalted God, who hast alone created and dost govern this whole frame, and all the

* Οὗτος σοφώτατος ἐστις ἔγνωκεν ὅτι οὐδένος ἄξιος ἐστὶ πρὸς σοφίαν.—PHILO. APOL. SOCR.

† Qui pelago credit, magno se fœnore tollit:
Qui pugnas et castra petit, præcingitur auro:
Vilis adulator picto jacet ebrius ostro;
Et qui solicitat nuptas, ad præmia peccat.
Sola pruinosis horret facundia pannis,
Atque inopi lingua desertas invocat artes

* Quæsitisque diu terris ubi sistere detur,
In mare lassatis volucris vaga decidit alis.

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inhabitants thereof, visible and invisible, whose name is alone wonderful, and to be celebrated with the highest praise, as it is indeed above all praise and admiration. Let the heavens, the earth, and all the elements praise thee. Let darkness, light, all the returns of days and years, and all the varieties and vicissitudes of things, praise thee. Let the angels praise thee, the archangels, and all the blessed court of heaven, whose very happiness it is, that they are constantly employed in celebrating thy praises. We confess, O Lord, that we are of all creatures the most unworthy to praise thee, yet, of all others, we are under the greatest obligations to do it: nay, the more unworthy we are, our obligation is so much the greater. From this duty, however unqualified we may be, we can by no means abstain, nor, indeed, ought we. Let our souls bless thee, and all that is within us praise thy holy name, who forgivest all our sins, and healest all our diseases; who deliverest our souls from destruction, and crownest them with bounty and tender mercies. Thou searchest the heart, O Lord, and perfectly knowest the most intimate recesses of it: reject not those prayers which thou perceivest to be the voice and the wishes of the heart. Now, it is the great request of our hearts, unless they always deceive us, that they may be weaned from all earthly and perishing enjoyments; and if there is anything to which they cleave with more than ordinary force, may they be pulled away from it by thy Almighty hand, that they may be joined to thee for ever in an inseparable marriage-covenant. And in our own behalf, we have nothing more to ask. We only add, in behalf of thy church, that it may be protected under the shadow of thy wings, and everywhere, throughout the world, watered by thy heavenly dew, that the spirit and heat of worldly hatred against it may be cooled, and its intestine divisions, whereby it is much more grievously scorched, extinguished: bless this nation, this city, and this university, in which we beg thou wouldst be pleased to reside, as a garden dedicated to thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## EXHORTATION II.

Would you have me to speak the truth with freedom and brevity? The whole world is a kind of stage, and its inhabitants mere actors. As to this little farce of yours, it is now very near a conclusion, and you are upon the point of applying to the spectators for their applause. Should any superciliously decline paying this small tribute [ἔραγον], you surely may, with great ease, retort their contempt upon themselves, merely by saying, Let your severity fall heavy on those who admire their own performances: as to this affair of ours, we know it is nothing at all. For I will not allow myself to doubt but you are very sensible, that there is indeed nothing in it.

It would, to be sure, be very improper, especially as the evening approaches, to detain you, and my other hearers, with a long and tedious discourse, when you are already more than enough fatigued, and almost quite tired out with hearing. I shall therefore only put you in mind of one thing, and that in a few words. Let not this solemn toy [ἐμπαίγμα], however agreeable to youthful minds, so far impose upon you, as to set you a dreaming of great advantages and pleasures to be met with in this new period of life you are entering upon. Look round you, if you please, and take a near and exact survey of all the different stations of life that are set before you. If you enter upon any of the stations of active life, what is this but jumping into a bush of thorns, where you can have no hope of enjoying quiet, and yet can not easily get out again? But if you rather choose to enter upon some new branch of science, alas! what a small measure of knowledge is to be thus obtained, with what vast labor is even that little to be purchased, and how often, after immense toil and difficulty, will it be found that Truth is still at a distance, and not yet extracted out of the well.* We indeed believe that the soul breathed into man, when he was first made, was pure, full of light, and every way worthy of its divine original. But ah! the Father of mankind, how soon, and how much was he changed from what he was at first! He foolishly gave ear to the fatal seducer, and that very moment was seized upon by death, whereby he at once lost his purity, his light, or truth, and, together with himself, ruined us also.

Now, since that period, what do you commonly meet with among men of wisdom and learning, as they would wish to be accounted, but fighting and bickering in the dark? And while they dispute, with the greatest heat, but at random, concerning the truth, that truth escapes out of their hands, and instead of it, both parties are put up with vain shadows or phantoms of it, and, according to the proverb, embrace a cloud instead of Juno.

But since we are forced to own, that even the most contemptible and minutest things in nature, often put all our philosophical subtlety to a nonplus, what ignorance and foolish presumption is it for us to aim at ransacking the most hidden recesses of Divine things, and boldly attempt to scan the Divine decrees, and the other most profound mysteries of religion, by the imperfect and scanty measures of our understandings! Whither would the presumption of man hurry him, while it prompts him to pry into every secret and hidden thing, and leave nothing at all unattempted!

As for you, young gentlemen, especially

* Ἐκ τοῦ βυθοῦ ἡ ἀλήθεια.

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those of you that intend to devote yourselves to theological studies, it is my earnest advice and request to you, that you fly far from that infectious curiosity which would lead you into the depths of that controversial, contentious theology, which if any doctrine at all deserves the name, may truly be termed, *science falsely so called.* And that you may not, in this respect, be imposed upon by the common reputation of acuteness and learning, I confidently affirm, that to understand and be master of those trifling disputes that prevail in the schools, is an evidence of a very mean understanding; while, on the contrary, it is an argument of a genius truly great, entirely to slight and despise them, and to walk in the light of pure and peaceable truth, which is far above the dark and cloudy region of controversial disputes. But you will say, It is necessary, in order to the defence of truth, to oppose errors, and blunt the weapons of sophists. Be it so: but our disputes ought to be managed with few words, for naked truth is most effectual for its own defence, and when it is once well understood, its natural light dispels all the darkness of error. *For all things that are reproved, are made manifest by the light,* saith the apostle. Your favorite philosopher has told us, that "what is straight discovers both rectitude and obliquity." And Clemens Alexandrinus has very justly observed, that "the ancient philosophers were not greatly disposed to disputes or doubting; but the latter philosophers among the Greeks, out of a vain desire to enhance their reputation, engaged so far in wrangling and contention, that their works became quite useless and trifling."*

There is but one useful controversy or dispute, one sort of war, most noble in its nature, and most worthy of a Christian, and this, not to be carried on against enemies at a great distance, but such as are bred within our own breasts: against those, it is most reasonable to wage an endless war, and them it is our duty to persecute to death. Let us all, children, young men, and old, exert ourselves vigorously in this warfare. Let our vices die before us, that death may not find us indolent, defiled, and wallowing in the mire; for then it will be most truly, and to our great misery, *death* to us: whereas, to those sanctified souls who are conformed to Christ, and conquerors by his means, it rather is to be called life, as it delivers them from their wanderings and vices, from all kinds of evils, and from that death which is final and eternal.

*Let us pray.*

Eternal God, who art constantly adored by thrones and powers, by seraphims and cherubims, we confess that thou art most worthy to be praised; but we, of all others, are the most unworthy to be employed in showing forth thy praise. How can polluted bodies, and impure souls, which, taken together, are nothing but mere sinks of sin, praise thee, the pure and holy majesty of heaven? Yet, how can these bodies which thou hast wonderfully formed, and these souls which thou hast inspired, which owe entirely to thine unmerited favor, all that they are, all that they possess, and all they hope for, forbear praising thee, their wise and bountiful Creator and Father? Let our souls, therefore, and all that is within us, bless thy holy name: yea, let all our bones say, O Lord, who is like unto thee; who is like unto thee? Far be it, most gracious Father, from our hearts, to harbor anything that is displeasing to thee: let them be, as it were, temples dedicated to thy service, thoroughly purged from every idol and image, from every object of impure love and earthly affection. Let our most gracious King and Redeemer dwell and reign within us. May he take full possession of us by his Spirit, and govern all our actions. May he extend his peaceable and saving kingdom throughout the whole habitable world, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof. Let the nations acknowledge their King, and the isles be glad in him; and particularly, that which we inhabit, with those in its neighborhood. And, that they may be truly blessed in him, may they daily submit more perfectly and dutifully to his golden sceptre, and the holy laws of his gospel! Bless this nation and city, and this our University; may it be continually watered with the dew of thy Spirit, and plentifully produce fruit acceptable in thy sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

* Ὅτι δὲ ὠλαιότατοι τῶν φιλοσοφῶν οὐδὲ ἐπὶ τὸ ἀμοιβηδὸν καὶ ἀπορεῖν ἐφέροντο ἀλλ' οἱ τῶν παρ' Ἕλλησι νεωτέροι, ὑπὸ φιλοτιμίας κενῆς καὶ ἀτελοῦς τλεκτικῶς ἅμα καὶ ἐριστικῶς, εἰς τὴν ἀχρηστον κέξαγονται φλυαριαν.

## EXHORTATION III.

This day, which has been the object of your earnest wishes throughout the course of four whole years, is now almost over, and hastening to a close. What has it produced for your advantage? Can he that has reaped most successfully of you all, say, he has filled his arms with sheaves? Though possibly you would excuse me to express myself with great freedom on this occasion, yet I will not take the liberty to depreciate too much your past studies, the specimens you have given to-day of your abilities, and the degree that has been conferred upon you. This, at least, I imagine, I may say, without offence, the most of those things we greedily catch at, and labor most earnestly to obtain, and consequently, even your philosophy is a real and demonstrative truth of that great paradox, that *there is a vacuity in the nature of things.* And, in truth, how great is that vacuity, seeing even the human race is no inconsiderable part of it! Though this day is marked with

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more than ordinary solemnity, it is, after all, but the conclusion and period of a number of days that have been idly spent, and is itself elapsing to little or no purpose, as well as the rest. But O! how glorious must that blessed day be, which all purified souls, and such as are dear to God, earnestly long for, throughout the whole of this perishing life, and constantly wait, with a kind of impatience, until it dawn, and the shadows fly away.

I am, indeed, of opinion, that those of you who think most justly, will readily own, your attainments, hitherto, are of no great moment. But possibly, henceforth you intend to begin life, as it were, anew: you aspire to greater matters, and entertain views worthy of human nature; you already begin to live, and to be wise; you form desires, and conceive hopes of rising to arts, riches, and honors. All this is very well. Yet, there is one consideration I would have you to admit among these ingenious projects and designs. What if death should come upon you, and, looking with an envious eye upon this towering prospect, put a stop to a project that extends itself so far into futurity, and, like a spider's web, entirely destroy it with a gentle breath of wind? Nor would this be any prodigy, or indeed an extraordinary event, but the common fate of almost all mankind. "We are always resolving to live, and yet never set about life in good earnest."* Archimedes was not singular in his fate; but a great part of mankind die unexpectedly, while they are poring upon the figures they have described in the sand. O wretched mortals! who, having condemned themselves, as it were, to the mines, seem to make it their chief study to prevent their ever regaining their liberty. Hence, new employments are assumed in the place of old ones; and, as the Roman philosopher truly expresses it, "one hope succeeds another, one instance of ambition makes way for another; and we never desire an end of our misery, but only that it may change its outward form."† When we cease to be candidates, and to fatigue ourselves in soliciting interest, we begin to give our votes and interest to those who solicit us in their turn. When we are wearied of the trouble of prosecuting crimes at the bar, we commence judges ourselves; and he who is grown old in the management of other men's affairs for money, is at last employed in improving his own wealth. At the age of fifty, says one, I will retire, and take my ease; or the sixtieth year of my life shall entirely disengage me from public offices and business. Fool! art thou not ashamed to reserve to thyself the last remains and dregs of life? Who will stand surety that thou shalt live so long? And what immense folly is it, so far to forget mortality, as to think of beginning to live at that period of years to which a few only attain!

As for you, young gentlemen, I heartily wish you may think more justly. Let your souls, as it were, retire into themselves, and dwell at home; and having shaken off the trifles that make a bustle and noise around you, consider seriously that the remaining part of your life is long only in one respect (and in this, indeed, its length may be justly complained of), that it is fraught with every sort of misery and affliction, and has nothing agreeable in it, but the study of heavenly wisdom alone; for everything else is vanity. Look about you, and see whether there is anything worthy of your affection, and whether everything you see does not rather excite your indignation and aversion. At home, are contentions and disputes; abroad in the fields, robbers; clamor and noise at the bar; wickedness in the camp; hypocrisy in the church; and vexation or lamentable mistakes everywhere. Among the rich and great, there are false and inconstant friendships, bitter enmities, envy, fraud, and falsehood; and cares, in great numbers, flutter round the most stately and sumptuous palaces.

What a considerable part of mankind are struggling with open and sharp afflictions! To whatever side you turn yourself, what do you commonly hear but lamentation and mourning? How many complaints of the poor, that are distressed for want of daily bread, or drag a most wretched life under the grievous oppression of powerful tyrants! How frequent are the groans of the sick and languishing! How great the multitude of those who lament their friends and relations carried off by death, and will themselves, in a short time, and for the same reason, be lamented by others! And, to conclude, how innumerable are the miseries and afflictions of various kinds, that seem alternately to re-echo to one another! Can it be any wonder, then, that a life of this kind should sometimes force, even from a wise man, such expressions of sorrow and concern as the following: "O mother, why didst thou bring me forth to be oppressed with afflictions and sorrows? Why didst thou introduce me into a life full of briers and thorns?"*

But you are now philosophers, and amid these dismal calamities, you comfort yourselves with the inward and hidden riches of wisdom, and the sciences you have acquired. The sciences! Tell us in what part of the earth they are to be found. Let us know, pray, where they dwell, that we may flock thither in great numbers. I know, indeed, where there is abundance of noise, with vain and idle words, and a jarring of opinions between contending disputants; I know where ignorance, under the disguise of a gown and a beard, has obtained the title of science; but where true knowledge is to be found I know

* Victuros agimus semper, nec vivimus unquam.

† Spes spem excipit, ambitionem ambitio, et miseriarum non quæritur finis sed schema tantum mutatur.

* Μήτερ, ἐμὴ τί μ' ἔτικτες ἔπει πολύμοχθον ἔτικτες,
Τίπτε μὲ τοῖς βίῳ δῶκας ἀκανθοφόρῳ.

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not. We grope in the dark, and though it is truth only we are in quest of, we fall into innumerable errors. But whatever may be our case with respect to the knowledge of nature, as to that of heavenly and Divine things, let us cheerfully embrace that rich present which Infinite Goodness has made us, and be thankful that the *day-spring from on high hath visited us.* "Because there was no wisdom on the earth," says Lactantius, "He sent a teacher from heaven."* Him let us follow as our guide: for he who follows his direction *shall not walk in darkness.*

*Let us pray.*

INFINITE, Eternal Creator and King of heaven and earth, bodies and spirits, who, being unmoved thyself, movest all things, and changest them at thy pleasure, while thou remainest thyself altogether unchangeable; who supportest all things by thy powerful hand, and governest them by thy nod, the greatest as well as the least; so that the greatest are no burden to thee, nor dost thou contemn the least. Behold! the nations before thee are as the drop of the bucket, and like the small dust of the balance; and these isles of ours, with all the rest in the world, are, in thy sight, but a very little thing. Yet thou deignest to be present in our assemblies, and take notice of our affairs, which are very inconsiderable. Let our souls adore thee, and fall down, with the greatest humility, at the footstool of thy throne, continually entreating thy grace, and constantly offering thee glory. Our praises add nothing to thee; but they exalt ourselves, enhance our happiness, and unite us with the society of angels; yet thou receivest them with a gracious hand, as most acceptable sacrifices, and incense of a sweet-smelling savor. Let us celebrate thee, O Lord, who art great, and greatly to be praised. Let all nations praise thee, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof. Set our hearts on fire with the flames of thy Divine love, that they may wholly ascend to thee as burnt-offerings, and nothing of ours may remain with us. O blessed transmigration, where the blind confidence of the flesh is transformed into a lively and pure faith, that has no dependance but upon thee alone; where self-love, and the love of the world, are exchanged for the love of thy infinite beauty; when our will shall centre in thine, and be altogether absorbed by it. Let this change, O bountiful Father, be brought about, for it is a change only to be effected by the power of thy hand: and as soon as our souls are made sensible of it, thy praise shall be for ever sounded within us, as in temples devoted to thy service.

Let thy whole church, O Lord, flourish and rejoice in the light of thy favor. Be favorable to this our university, city, and nation. Dispel, we pray thee, the thick clouds, and quiet the winds and storms; for, when they rage most, and make the greatest noise, they know thy voice, and obey it. Thou art the only God of peace, who createst it with a word, and makest righteousness and peace mutually to kiss one another. We depend upon thee only; and to thee alone we render praise and glory, as far as we can, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

* Cùm nulla in terris esset sapientia, è cœlo misit doctorem.

## EXHORTATION IV.

OUR life is but a point, and even less than a point; but as it is not a mathematical point, as they call it, not quite indivisible, when we divide it into minute parts, it appears something considerable, and assumes the imaginary appearance of a large space of time; nay, according to Aristotle's notion, it appears divisible *in infinitum.* Besides those common and idle divisions of human life, into the four stages of childhood, youth, manhood, and old age, and into periods of ten years, which suppose the yet smaller divisions of years and months; men have many various ways of distributing the periods of their life, according to the different occupations and studies they have been engaged in, the remarkable events that have happened to them, and the several alterations and revolutions in the course of their lives. And I doubt not but you, young gentlemen, look upon this present instant of time as the beginning of a new period of your life. You have my leave to do so, provided you seriously consider, at the same time, that the whole of the life we live in this world is of a frail and fleeting nature, and, in some respect, nothing at all. And into whatever parts or periods we divide it, if we consider the miseries and lamentable calamities with which it is fraught, the life even of a child may seem too long; but, if we consider the time only, we must conclude the life of the oldest man to be exceeding short and fleeting.

A great part of mankind no sooner look upon themselves to be capable of worldly affairs, and think on entering upon some profession suitable to manhood, but they are cut off, in the very beginning of their course, by an unforeseen and untimely death. And, to be sure, this is the great distemper of young, and even of old men, that, by their desires and designs, they launch out a great way into futurity, and form a series of projects for many years to come; while, in the meantime, they rarely, or at least very superficially, consider, how foolish and precarious it is to depend upon to-morrow, and how soon this present form of ours may disappear; how soon we may return to our original dust; *and that very day,* as the royal prophet warns us, *our thoughts,* even the wisest and best-concerted thoughts of the greatest men, and most exalted princes, *perish.* And this I take



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particular notice of, that no such illusion may get possession of your minds. For it is not the common sort of mankind only, that impose upon themselves in this respect, but the generality of those who desire to be accounted, not only men of learning, but also adepts in wisdom, and actually pass for such. Not that I would prohibit your making an early and prudent choice, under the Divine direction, of the employment and profession of life you intend to pursue; nay, I would use every argument to persuade you to make use of such a choice, and when you have made it, to prosecute the intention of it with the greatest diligence and activity. I only put you upon your guard, not to entertain many and towering hopes in this world, nor to form a long series of connected projects; because you will find them all more vain and fleeting than illusions of the night! Some necessary means will fail, some favorable opportunity be missed; after all industry, the expected event may not happen, or the thread of your life may be cut, and thereby all your projects be rendered abortive. And though your life should be drawn out to ever so great a length, and success constantly answer your expectations, yet, you know, and I wish you would remember it, the fatal day will come at last, perhaps when it is least expected; that fatal and final day, I say, will at last come, when we must leave all our enjoyments, and all our schemes, those we are now carrying on, and those we have brought to perfection, as well as those that are only begun, and those that subsist only in hopes and ideas.

And these very arguments, which have been used to confine your minds from indulging themselves in too remote prospects, will also serve to persuade you, in another sense, to look much further: not with regard to worldly enjoyments, for such prospects, strictly speaking, can not be called long; but to look far beyond all earthly and perishing things, to those that are heavenly and eternal. And those that will not raise their eyes to such objects, as the Apostle Peter expresses it, *are blind, and can not see afar off.*

But of you, my dear youths, I expect better things. I need not, I imagine, use many words to persuade you to industry, and a continual progress in human studies and philosophical learning. If the violence and infelicity of the times have deprived you of any part of that period of years usually employed in these studies at this university, you will surely repair that loss, as soon as possible, by your subsequent reading and application. But if no such misfortune had happened, you are not, I believe, ignorant, that our schools are only intended for laying the foundations of those studies upon which years, and indefatigable industry, are to raise the superstructure of more complete erudition: which, by the accession of the Divine Spirit, may be consecrated into a temple for God. And this is what I would recommend to your esteem, and your earnest desires, beyond any other study whatever, *That you may be holy, because our God is holy;* that, when you leave this university, those with whom you converse, may not find you puffed up with pride, on account of a little superficial learning, nor bigoted, talkative, or fond of entering into unseasonable disputes; but consider you all as patterns and examples of piety, purity, temperance, modesty, and all Christian virtues; particularly that humility which shone so brightly in Christ himself, and which he earnestly exhorts all his disciples to learn from him. I will not suspect that any of you will turn out to be an immodest person, a glutton, or drunkard, or in any shape impious and profane; but I earnestly exhort and beseech you, my dear young men, to make it, above all other things, your principal study, to have your hearts purged from all impure and ignoble love of the world and the flesh, that in this earth you may live to God only; and then, to be sure, when you remove out of it, you will live with him for ever in heaven.

May the honorary title you have this day received be happy and auspicious! But I earnestly pray the Father of lights that he would deign to bestow on you a title more solid and exalted than it is in the power of man to give, that you may be called the *sons of God*, and that your conversation may be suitable to so great a name, and so glorious a Father.

*Let us pray.*

Eternal King! Thy throne is established and immoveable from everlasting, and will continue so throughout all the ages of eternity. Before the mountains were brought forth, before thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. All things that exist, whether visible or invisible, derive from thee their being, and all that they possess: and they all, from the least to the greatest, are subservient to thy purposes, who art their supreme King and Father. Many of them, indeed, act without knowledge or design, yet serve thee with a constant and unerring obedience; others pay their homage from principles of reason and inclination; and all the rest are forced to promote thy intentions, though by constraint and against their wills. Thou art great, O Lord, thou art great, and greatly to be praised, and of thy greatness there is no end. The heavens are far raised from the earth, but thy majesty is much farther exalted above all our thoughts and conceptions. Impress, we pray thee, on our hearts, most bountiful Father, a profound sense of our meanness and insignificancy; and make us acceptable to thee, through thy grace, in thy beloved Jesus, blotting out all our sins by the blood of his cross, and purifying our hearts by the effusion of thy Spirit from on high. Illuminate, most gracious God, this assembly of ours, by the light of thy Divine favor, and let thy effect-

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ual blessing, we pray thee, attend the work we are now employed about, by thy approbation, and the gracious disposition of thy providence, and may the result of all be to the glory of thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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## EXHORTATION V.

The complaint with regard to the vanity of all perishing and transitory enjoyments, which has been long general among mankind, is indeed just and well-founded; but it is no less true, that the vanity which resides in the heart of man himself, exceeds every thing of that kind we observe in the other parts of the visible creation; for, among all the creatures that we see around us, we can find nothing so fleeting and inconstant; it flutters hither and thither, and forsaking that only perfect good which is truly suited to its nature and circumstances, grasps at phantoms and shadows of happiness, which it pursues with a folly more than childish.

Man wanders about on this earth; he hopes, he wishes, he seeks, he gropes and feels about him; he desires, he is hot, he is cold, he is blind, and complains that evil abounds everywhere; yet, he is himself the cause of those evils which rage in the world, but most of all in his own breast; and therefore, being tossed between the waves thereof, that roll continually within and without him, he leads a restless and disordered life, until he be at last swallowed up in the unavoidable gulf of death. It is, moreover, the shame and folly of the human race, that the greatest part of them do not resolve upon any fixed and settled method of life, but, like the brute creatures, live and die without design, and without proposing any reasonable end. For how few are there, who seriously and frequently consider with themselves, whence they come, whither they are going, and what is the purpose of their life: who are daily reviewing the state of their own minds, and often descend into themselves, that they may as frequently ascend, by their thoughts and meditations, to their exalted Father, and their heavenly country; who take their station upon temporal things, and view those that are eternal! Yet, these are the only men that can be truly said to live, and they alone can be accounted wise.

And to this it is, my dear youths, that I would willingly engage your souls; nay, I heartily wish they were carried thither, by the fiery chariots of celestial wisdom. Let the common sort of mankind admire mean things; let them place their hopes on riches, honors, and arts, and spend their lives in the pursuit of them; but let your souls be inflamed with a far higher ambition. Yet I would not altogether prohibit you these pursuits: I only desire you to be moderate in them. These enjoyments are neither great in themselves, nor permanent; but it is surprising, how much vanity is inflated by them. What a conceited, vain nothing is the creature we call man! For, because few are capable to discern true blessings, which are solid and intrinsically beautiful, therefore the superficial ones, and such as are of no value at all, are catched at; and those who in any measure attain to the possession of them, are puffed up and elated thereby.

If we consider things as they are, it is an evidence of a very wrong turn of mind, to boast of titles and fame; as they are no part of ourselves, nor can we depend upon them. But he that is elevated with a fond conceit of his own knowledge, is a stranger to the nature of things, and particularly to himself; since he knows not that the highest pitch of human knowledge ought, in reality, rather to be called ignorance. How small and inconsiderable is the extent of knowledge! Even the most contemptible things in nature, are sufficient to expose the greatness of our ignorance. And with respect to Divine things, who dares to deny, that the knowledge mankind has of them is next to nothing? Because the weak eyes of our understanding, confined, as they are, within such narrow houses of clay, can not bear the piercing light of divine things; therefore, the Fountain of all wisdom hath thought proper to communicate such imperfect discoveries of himself, as are barely sufficient to direct our steps to the superior regions of perfect light. And whoever believes this truth, will, doubtless, make it his chief care and principal study, constantly to follow this lamp of divine light that shines in darkness, and not to deviate from it either to the right hand or the left. It is, indeed, my opinion, that no man of ingenuity ought to despise the study of philosophy, or the knowledge of languages, or grammar itself: though to be sure a more expeditious and successful method of teaching them were much to be wished. But what I would recommend with the greatest earnestness, and persuade you to, if possible, is, that you would inseparably unite with such measures of learning and improvement of your minds as you can attain, purity of religion, Divine love, moderation of soul, and an agreeable, inoffensive behavior. For you are not ignorant what a low and empty figure the highest attainments in human sciences must make, if they be compared with the dignity and duration of the soul of man: for, however considerable they may be in themselves, yet, with regard to their use, and their whole design, they are confined within the short space of this perishing life. But the soul which reasons, which is employed in learning and teaching, in a few days will for ever bid farewell to all these things, and remove to another country. O, how inconsiderable are all arts and sciences, all eloquence and philosophy, when compared with a cautious concern

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that our last exit out of this world may be happy and auspicious, and that we may depart out of this life candidates for immortality, at which we can never arrive but by the beautiful way of holiness.

*Let us pray.*

INFINITE and Eternal God! who inhabitest thick darkness and light inaccessible, whom no mortal hath seen, or can see; yet all thy works evidently declare and proclaim thy wisdom, thy power, and thy infinite goodness: And, when we contemplate these thy perfections, what is it our souls can desire, but that they may love thee, worship thee, serve thee, for ever proclaim thy praise, and celebrate thy exalted name, which is above all praises, and all admiration? Thy throne is constantly surrounded by thousands and ten thousands of glorified spirits, who continually adore thee and cry out without ceasing, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come.* Let others seek what they will, and find and embrace what they can; may we have always this one fixed and settled purpose, that it is good for us to draw near to God. Let the seas roar, the earth be shaken, and all things go to ruin and confusion; yet, the soul that adheres to God, will remain safe and quiet, and shall not be moved for ever. O blessed soul that has thee for its rest, and all its salvation! It shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water; it shall not fear when heat cometh, nor shall it be uneasy in a year of drought. It is our earnest petition and prayer, O Father, that thy hands may loosen all our chains, and effectually deliver our souls from all the snares and allurements of the world and the flesh; and that, by that same bountiful and most powerful hand of thine, they may be for ever united to thee through thy only begotten Son, who is our union and our peace. Be favorably present, most gracious God, with this assembly of ours, that whatever we undertake, in obedience to thy will, may be carried to perfection by the aid of thy grace, and tend to the glory of thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## EXHORTATION VI.

I AM not ignorant, that it is one of the common arts of life, to set off our own things with all the pomp we can; and, if there is any worth in them, by no means to depreciate it, but rather to endeavor, with all our might, to enhance their value as much as possible: nay, those of them which are quite vain and worthless, we use to magnify with pompous expressions, and daub with false colors, and to do otherwise is reckoned a kind of rustic simplicity. But you, young gentlemen, who are acquainted with my manner, will, I imagine, easily forgive this indifference of mine; and, therefore, I say, if there are any who despise these performances of ours, we leave them at full liberty, for we ourselves held them in contempt before: but to speak freely, together with them we undervalued all worldly things; they are all made of the same mean materials [Πάντα ῥῖα κόνις] O life, short with regard to duration, long in consideration of thy miseries, involved in darkness, beset with snares, still fluctuating between false joys and real torments, groundless hopes and fears equally imaginary, yet foolishly, and even to distraction, loved by most! We will not die, and yet, we know not how to live. Our present possessions are loathsome as food to a man in a fever, and we greedily catch at future enjoyments, which, when they come to be present, will be received with the same indifference: for, among the advantages of this fleeting life, nothing is equally agreeable to those who have it in possession, and those who have it only in desire and hope.

We are all in general of such a nature, that we are weary of ourselves, and, what we lately preferred to everything else, upon experience we reject. This inconstancy is undoubtedly a sign of a mind distempered, forcibly drawn away from its centre, and separated from its only durable rest. Nor need you go far, young gentlemen, to look for an instance of this distemper: let any of you descend into himself (which very few do, and even they but rarely), he will find it within him; upon a very slight inquiry, he will surely be sensible of it. For passing other considerations, with what fervent wishes have you, in your hearts, longed for this day! Yet I forewarn you, that all your pleasure will either die with the day itself, which is now fast drawing to a close, or but for a very short time survive it. And, as commonly happens, it will be succeeded by the anxious cares of beginning life, as it were, anew; or which is much more grievous and unhappy, and from which I earnestly pray you may be all effectually preserved, by those temptations and allurements of vice, which tend to debauch and ruin you. For these allurements, after the manner of some robbers, attack the unwary and inexperienced with blandishments and caresses, that thereby they may have an opportunity to undo them. If therefore, as soon as ye enter upon a life of freedom, those deceitful and deadly pleasures of sense tempt you with their delusive smiles, I would put you in mind, how unworthy it is of a free and generous mind, especially that of a Christian, to become an abject slave, and submit to the most shameful bondage; how disgraceful and wretched a choice it is, to become the *slave of a mad, distracted master*;* and how much more generous and exalted is the pleasure of despising them all, and trampling them under foot, when they come in competition with the pure and permanent delights of Divine love.

As to exalted degrees of honor, and heaps

* Δοῦλον γὰρ θαι παραφρονοῦντος δεσπότου.

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of riches, the idols of all ranks of mankind which they worship with the rage of enthusiasm and madness, we may not only apply to them what was observed of old concerning Hercules's statue, and say, "They have nothing Divine in them;"* but also, that they are entirely void of real goodness. Even those who have the greatest experience of them, are at last obliged to own this: the force of truth extorts the confession, though they make it with regret and against their will. All the beauty and brightness of these idols resemble the decorations of a stage, that dazzle the eyes of the vulgar; and the enjoyment of them is, in reality, but a splendid kind of slavery, and gilded misery. It is a pathetic expression of St. Bernard, "O ambition, the torture of the ambitious, how happens it, that though thou tormentest all, thou yet makest thyself agreeable to all?"† O how easily does even the least glimpse of eternal and infinite beauty rase out of the mind all the impressions made upon it by the objects we daily converse with on this earth, and turn its admiration of them into contempt and disdain.

But if any one, having thoroughly examined and despised these shadows, resolves solely to pursue a more complete knowledge of things, and follow the streams of learning, we can not deny, that he judges most justly; yet, after all, he must know, if he is wise, or at least he ought to know, that he may be wise, what vanity and superfluity is to be met with even here:‡ for often, when one has applied himself to his books and studies with the greatest assiduity, and almost spent his life upon them, all his pains evaporate into smoke, and the labor of years is entirely lost. And, what is most of all to be lamented, this is sometimes the case with respect to theology, which is the chief of all arts and sciences, as so large a portion of that vineyard is still possessed with briers and thorns. How many are the disputes and controversies, how many the trifling arguments and cavils, which possibly may have something of the sharpness of thorns, but undoubtedly a great deal of their barrenness and their hurtful quality! A philosopher of old, severely reproves the sophisters of his time in these words: "What was formerly the love of wisdom, is now become the love of words."‖ We, to be sure, may substitute in place of this, a complaint still more bitter, that what was theology before, is now become foolish talking; and that many of our divines, though they serve one God, and that the *God of peace*, yet split into parties upon the lightest occasions, and with great impiety divide the whole world into factions. And I am much afraid, this evil, in a great measure, derives its original from the education of youth in schools and colleges. For the most part of men manage this business, as if disputing was the end of learning, as fighting is the design of going to war: hence the youth when they enter the school, begin disputing, which never ends but with their life. Death imposes silence, and so, at last, "these fierce passions of their minds, and these inveterate contentions, are composed to rest, by the weight of a little dust thrown upon them."*

As for you, young gentlemen, if my earnest wishes and sincere advice can have any weight with you, you will early extricate yourselves out of these flames of contention, that your minds, being lighted up by the pure and celestial fire of the Divine Spirit, may shine forth in holiness, and burn with the most fervent charity.

*Let us pray.*

Honor and praise is due to thee, O infinite God. This is the universal voice of all the blessed spirits on high, and all the saints on earth: worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power, because thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are. We, here before thee, with united hearts and affections offer thee, as we can, the sacrifice of gratitude, love and praise. How much are we indebted to thee, for ourselves, and for all that we possess! For in thee we live, move, and have our being. Thou hast redeemed us from our sins, having given the Son of thy love as a sacrifice and ransom for our souls: the chastisement of our peace fell upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. On this consideration, we acknowledge we are no longer at our own disposal, since we are bought with a price, and so very great a price, that we may glorify thee O Father, and thy Son, in our souls and our bodies, which are so justly thine. May we devote ourselves to thee, through the whole remaining part of our life, and disdain the impure and ignoble slavery of sin, the world and the flesh, that in all things we may demean ourselves as becomes the sons of God, and the heirs of thy celestial kingdom, and make daily greater progress in our journey toward the happy possession thereof.

Bless thy church, and our nation, and this our university: may it be thine, we pray thee. We entreat that thou wouldst become our father, our protector, and our supreme teacher, who hast thy chair in heaven, and teachest the hearts of men on this earth. May the youth flourish under thy instruction, that they may be not only learned, but especially upright, pious, and true Christians, entirely devoted to the honor of thy name, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

* Ως οὐδὲν ἱερὸν θεῖον.

† O! ambitio, ambientium crux, quomodo omnes torquens omnibus places?

‡ Πολλὰ ἐστι κενὰ καὶ ὠφέλεργα.

‖ Quæ philosophia fuit, facta philologia est.

* Hi motus animorum, atque hæc certamina tanta
Pulveris exigui jactu compressa quiescunt.
Virgil., Geor iv., 8, l. 6.

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## EXHORTATION VII.

These academical exercises of ours are, to be sure, no great matter, nor do we make any high account of them; yet, after all, we set no higher, perhaps even a less value upon the bustling affairs of mankind, which make a much greater noise, and the farces that are acted upon the more exalted theatres of the world: which, to speak my sentiments in a few words, are for the most part outwardly more pompous than these of ours, but inwardly equally vain, and more insignificant than the busy amusements of "children playing on the sands, and eagerly building little houses, which, with giddy levity, they instantly pull down again."* Or, if you chose to be more severe upon the fruitless labors of mankind, and their busy and irregular motions backward, and forward, and from one place to another, you may, with a great man, who knew all these by experience, compare them to the *fluttering of frightened flies, the toilsome hurry of the ants, and the motions of puppets.*† But he that, amid all the confusions and commotions which happen in human affairs here below, has recourse to Divine contemplation and the hopes of eternity, as the lofty impregnable tower of true wisdom, "is the only person that enjoys uninterrupted ease and tranquillity, like the heavenly bodies, which constantly move on in their orbits, and are never, by any violence, diverted from their course."‡

And indeed, what wonder is it, that he can easily view all the dreadful appearances of this wretched life with a resolute and steady countenance, who, by frequent interviews and daily conversation with death itself, which we call the *king of terrors*,‖ has rendered it familiar to him, and thereby not only divested it of its terrors, but also placed in it a beautiful, pleasant, and quite amiable light. By this means, he dies daily; and doubtless, before he suffers a natural death, he dies in a more exalted sense of the word, by withdrawing, as far as is possible, his mind from the encumbrance of earthly things, and even while it lodges in the body, weaning it from all the worldly objects that are placed about him. And, in this very sense, philosophy of old was most properly called the *meditation of death*,§ which the Roman orator has, in my opinion, explained with great propriety, and the precision of a philosopher. "What is it we do," say he, "when we withdraw the mind from pleasure, that is, the body, from our means and substance that is the servant of the body, that provides for its wants from the commonwealth, and every kind of business: what is it we then do, I say, but recal it to itself, and oblige it to stay at home Now to withdraw the mind from the body, is nothing else but to learn to die."* Let us, therefore, reason thus, if you will take my advice, and separate ourselves from our bodies; that is, let us accustom ourselves to die: this even while we sojourn on this earth, will be to the soul a life like to that which it will enjoy in heaven; and, being delivered from these fetters, we shall move at a better rate, the course of our souls will be less retarded in our journey to that happy place, at which when we arrive, we can then, and then only be truly said to live. For this life is but a kind of death, the miseries whereof I could paint, if it were seasonable; but, to be sure, it was most justly called *a life of the greatest misery*† by Dionysius the Areopagite, or whoever was the author of that book which goes under his name.

And indeed, young gentlemen, I am of opinion, that such a view and meditation of death, will not be unsuitable, or improper, even for you, though you are in the prime of life, and your minds in their full vigor: nay, I would gladly hope, you yourselves will not imagine it would, nor be at all offended at me, as if, by mentioning that inauspicious word unseasonably, I disturbed your present joy, drew a kind of black cloud over this bright day of festivity, or seem to mix among your laurels a branch of the hated cypress. For a wise man would not willingly owe his joy to madness, nor think it a pleasure foolishly to forget the situation of his affairs.

The wise man alone feels true joy: and real wisdom is the attainment of a Christian only, who bears with life, but hopes for death, and passes through all the storms and tempests of the former with an undauntedness of mind, but with the most fervent wishes looks for the latter as the secure port and the *fair havens*‡ in the highest sense of the expression; whose mind is humble, and, at the same time, exalted, neither depending upon foreign, that is, external advantages, nor puffed up with his own; and neither elevated nor depressed by any turns or vicissitudes of fortune.

He is the wise man, who relinquishes things as they really are; who is not, with the common sort of mankind, that are always children, terrified by bug-bears, nor pleased with painted rattles: who has a greatness of soul, vastly superior to all fading and perishing things; who judges of his im

* Ὡς ὁτε τις ψάμαθον συνάγη παῖς ἄγχι θαλάττη,
Ὃς ἔπει οὐν ποίησεν ἀθύρματα, νηπίετοισιν
Ἄψ αὖθις συνέχευε ποσιν καὶ χερσιν ἀθύρων.

† Μυιδίων επτοημενων διαδρομας μυρμήκων ταλαιπωρίας αἱ ἀχθοφορίας καὶ σιγλλάρια νευροσπαστούμενα.

‡ Otia solus agit, sicut cœlestia semper
Inconcussa suo volvuntor sidera lapsu. Luc., lib. ii.

‖ Μελέτη θανάτου.

§ Φρικωδεστάτην ἔικονα.

* Quid aliud agimus, cum a voluptate, id est a corpore, cum familiari quæ ministra est et famula corporis, cum a republica cum a negotio omni severamus animum, quid tum agimus (inquam) nisi illum ad seipsum advocamus, et secum esse cogimus? Secernere autem a corpore animum, necquicquam aliud est quam emori discere.

† Πολυπαθεστατην ζωην.

‡ Καλους λιμενας.

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provements by his life, and thinks he knows everything he does not covet, and everything he does not fear. The only thing he desires, is the favor and countenance of the Supreme King; the only thing he fears, is his displeasure. And, without doubt a mind of this cast must, of necessity, be the habitation of constant serenity, exalted joy, and gladness springing from on high. And this is the man, that is truly possessed of that εὐθυμίαν, καὶ γαλήνην—tranquillity and happy disposition of mind, which the philosophers boast of, the divines recommend, but few attain. And though he will neither willingly suffer himself to be called a philosopher, nor a philologist, yet he is, in reality, θεόσοφος, well versed in the things of God, and, by a kind of Divine influence and instruction, has attained to the light of pure and peaceable truth: where he passes his days in the greatest quietness and serenity, far above the cloudy and stormy regions of controversy and disputation.

If any one of you has been thus instructed, he has certainly attained the highest of all arts, and has entered upon the most glorious liberty, even before he hath received any university degree. But the rest, though they are presently to have the title of master of arts, still continue a silly, servile set of men, under a heavy yoke of bondage, whereby even their minds will be cramped with oppressive laws, far more intolerable than any discipline, however severe. None of you, I imagine, is so excessively blinded with self-conceit, so ignorant of the nature of things, and unacquainted with himself, as to dream that he is already a philosopher, or be puffed up with an extravagant opinion of his own knowledge, because he has gone through the ordinary exercises at the university; though, to speak the truth, the philosophy which prevails in the schools, is of a vain, airy nature, and more apt to inspire the mind with pride, than to improve it. As it is my earnest prayer, so it is also the object of my hope, that you will retire from this seminary, with your minds excited to a keen and wholesome thirst after true erudition, rather than blown up with the wildfire of science, falsely so called; and what, above all other attainments, is of greatest consequence, that you will leave us, deeply affected with the most ardent love of heavenly wisdom. Whatever may be your fate with respect to other things, it is my earnest request, that it be your highest ambition, and your principal study, to be true Christians; that is, to be humble, meek, pure, holy, and followers of your most auspicious Captain, the Lamb, wherever he goeth. For he that followeth him shall not walk in darkness, but be conducted, through the morning light of Divine grace to the meridian and never-ending brightness of glory.

*Let us pray.*

ETERNAL Father of mercies and of lights, the only rest of the immortal souls which thou hast created, and their never-failing consolation. Into what by-paths of error do our souls divert, and to what dangers are they exposed on every hand, when they stray away from thee! But while they keep within thy hiding-place, O Most High, they are safe under the shadow of thy wings. O how happy are they, and how well do they live, who pass their whole lives in that secret abode, where they may continually refresh themselves with the delicious fruits of thy love, and show forth thy praise! where they may taste and see that thou art good, O Lord, and be thoroughly persuaded of the immense riches of thy bounty, which all our miseries can not exceed, nor our poverty exhaust; nay, which the constant effusion of them upon the whole universe, and all its parts, can not in the least diminish. As for us who are before thee, the most unworthy of all thy creatures, yet, at the same time, the most excessively loaded with all the instances of thy goodness, can we avoid crying out with the united voices of our hearts, Let praise be ascribed to the Lord, because he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever. Who shall declare the great and wonderful works of God? Who shall shall show forth his praise? Who ruleth by his power for ever, and his eyes observe the nations, that the rebellious may not exalt themselves. Who restores our souls to life, and suffers not our feet to be moved? But, on the other hand, alas! how justly may our songs be interrupted with bitter lamentations, that, under such strong and constant rays of his bounty, our hearts are so cold toward him! O how faint and languid is our love to him! How very little, or near to nothing, is the whole of that flame which we feel within us! And, as that love fails within us, we misplace our affections upon the things around us; and, as we follow vanity, we become vain and miserable at the same time. But may thy Spirit, O Lord, whom we humbly and earnestly beg of thee, descending into our hearts, inspire us thoroughly with life, vigor, and celestial purity!

Please to enlighten thy church throughout the whole habitable world, and particularly in these islands, with the continued light of thy countenance. If thou apply thy healing hand, we shall presently be whole: nor need we look to any quarter for other remedies than those we have always found to be more powerful than our most obstinate distempers. Bless this city, and this celebrated university. Grant, most gracious Father, that the numbers of youth we send out from it this day, and every year, may, by thy effectual grace, be consecrated and devoted to thy service. Forbid, we pray thee, that they should either be the means of spreading pollution among thy people, or suffer themselves to be tainted with the infection of a wicked world; but let this fountain of learning be continually enriched with thy heavenly influences, that it may constantly supply pure and limpid

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streams for the welfare and improvement of thy church and people, to the glory of thy exalted name, through our Lord Jesus Christ; to whom, with thee, and the Holy Spirit, be nonor, praise, and glory, world without end. Amen.

## EXHORTATION VIII.

AMID these amusements, we are unhappily losing a day. Yet, some part of the weight of this complaint is removed when we consider, that, while the greatest part of mankind are bustling in crowds and places of traffic, or, as they would have us believe, in affairs of great importance, we are trifling our time more innocently than they. But what should hinder us from closing this last scene in a serious manner, that is, from turning our eyes to more Divine objects, whereby, though we are fatigued with other matters, we may terminate the work of this day, and the day itself, agreeably: as the beams of the sun use to give more than ordinary delight when he is near his setting?

You are now initiated into the philosophy, such as it is, that prevails in the schools, and, I imagine, intend, with all possible despatch, to apply to higher studies. But O! how pitiful and scanty are all those things which beset us before, behind, and on every side! The bustling we observe, is nothing but the hurrying of ants eagerly engaged in their little labors. The mind must surely have degenerated, and forgotten its original as effectually as if it had drank of the river Lethe, if, extricating itself out of all these mean concerns and designs, as so many snares laid for it, and rising above the whole of this visible world, it does not return to its Father's bosom, where it may contemplate his eternal beauty, where contemplation will inflame love, and love be crowned with the possession of the beloved object. But, in the contemplation of this glorious object, how great caution and moderation of mind is necessary, that, by prying presumptuously into his secret councils or his nature, and rashly breaking into the *sanctuary of light*,* we be not quite involved in darkness! And, with regard to what the infinite, independent, and necessarily existent Being has thought proper to communicate to us concerning himself, and we are concerned to know, even that is by no means to be obscured with curious, impertinent questions, nor perplexed with the arrogance of disputation; because, by such means, instead of enlarging our knowledge, we are in the fair way to know nothing at all; but readily to be received by humble faith, and entertained with meek and pious affections. And if, in these notices of him that are communicated to us, we meet with anything obscure and hard to be understood, such difficulties would be happily got over, not by perplexed controversies, but by constant and fervent prayer. "He will come to understand," says admirably well the famous bishop of Hippo [Augustine], "who knocks by prayer; not he who, by quarrelling, makes a noise at the gate of truth."† But what can we, who are mortal creatures, understand with regard to the inexpressible Being we now speak of, especially while we sojourn in these dark prisons of clay, but only this, that we can by no means comprehend him? For though, in thinking of him, we remove from our idea all sort of imperfection, and collect together every perceivable perfection, and adorn the whole with the highest titles, we must, after all, acknowledge that we have said nothing, and that our conceptions are nothing to the purpose. Let us, therefore, in general acknowledge him to be the immoveable Being that moveth everything, the immutable God that changeth all things at his pleasure, the infinite and eternal Fountain of all good and of all existence, and the Lord and sole Ruler of the world.

If you, then, my dear youths, aspire to genuine Christianity, that is, the knowledge of God and Divine things, I would have you consider that the mind must first be recalled and engaged to turn in upon itself, before it can be raised up toward God: according to that expression of St. Bernard, "May I return from external things, to those that are within myself, and from these again rise to those that are of a more exalted nature."‡ But the greatest part of men live abroad, and are truly strangers at home; you may sooner find them anywhere than with themselves. Now, is this not real madness, and the highest degree of insensibility? Yet, after all, they seem to have some reason in their madness, when they thus stray away from themselves, since they can see nothing within them that by its promising aspect can give them pleasure or delight. Everything there is ugly, frightful, and full of nastiness, which they would rather be ignorant of, than be at the pains to purge away; and therefore prefer a slothful forgetfulness of their misery, to the trouble and labor of regaining happiness. But how preposterous is the most diligent study, and the highest knowledge, when we neglect that of ourselves! The Roman philosopher, ridiculing the grammarians of his time, observes, that "they inquired narrowly into the misfortunes of Ulysses, but were quite ignorant of their own."§ The sentiments of a wise and pious man are quite different, and I wish you may adopt them. It is his principal care to be thoroughly acquainted with himself;—he watches over his own ways, he improves and cultivates his heart as a garden consecrated

* Εἰς τὰ τοῦ φωτος ἄδυτα.

* Intelliget qui orando pulsat, non qui rixando obstrepit ad ostium veritatis.

† Ab exterioribus ad interiora, ab interioribus ad superiora ascendam.

‡ Ulyssis mala expeorant, ignorant sua.

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to the King of kings, who takes particular delight in it; he carefully nurses the heavenly plants and flowers, and roots up all the wild and noxious weeds, that he may be able to say with the greater confidence, *Let my beloved come into his own garden, and be pleased to eat of his fruits.* And when, upon this invitation, the great King, in the fulness of his goodness, descends into the mind, the soul may then easily ascend with him, as it were, in a chariot of fire, and look down upon the earth, and all earthly things, with contempt and disdain. "Then rising above the rainy regions, it sees the storms falling beneath its feet, and tramples upon the hidden thunder."*

*Let us pray.*

WHATEVER satisfaction we look for without thee, O heavenly Father, is mere delusion and vanity. Yet, though we have so often experienced this, we have not, to this day, learned to renounce this vain and fruitless labor, that we may depend upon thee, who alone canst give full and complete satisfaction to the souls of men. We pray, therefore, that, by thy Almighty hand, thou wouldst so effectually join and unite our hearts to thee, that they may never be separated any more. How unhappy are they who forsake thee, and whose hearts depart from thy ways! They shall be like shrubs in the desert; they shall not see when good cometh, but dwell in a parched and barren land. Blessed, on the contrary, is he who hath placed his confidence in thee: he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water; he shall not be afraid when heat cometh, nor be uneasy in the time of drought. Take from us, O Lord, whatever earthly enjoyments thou shalt think proper: there is one thing will abundantly make up all our losses; let Christ dwell in our hearts by faith, and the rays of thy favor continually refresh us in the face of thine anointed; in this event, we have nothing to ask, but with grateful minds shall for ever celebrate thy bounty, and all our bones shall say, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, who is like unto thee?"

Let thy church be glad in thee, and all in this nation, and everywhere throughout the world who regard and love thy name. By the power and efficacy of the gospel, may their number be daily augmented, and let the gifts of thy grace be also increased in them all. Bless this university; let it be like a garden watered by thy heavenly hand, that thy tender shoots may grow, and in due time produce abundant fruits, to the eternal honor of thy most glorious name, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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# VALEDICTORY ORATION.

THOUGH this, I imagine, is the last address I shall ever have occasion to make to you, I will not detain you long from your studies, nor encroach on the time allowed you for recreation. This is, to be sure, the first time that some of you have heard me; but I have a great many others to bear witness of the constant design of all my dissertations in this place. They will testify that the intention of all my discourses was, *that the form of sound words*, that is, the Christian doctrine, and consequently the fear and love of God, might not only be impressed, but also engraven upon your hearts in lasting and indelible characters: and that you might not only admit as a truth, but also pay the highest regard to this indisputable maxim, that "piety and religion is the only real good among men."† Moreover, that your minds might be the less encumbered in their application to this grand study of religion, and the more expeditious in their progress therein, I constantly endeavored, with all possible warmth, to divert you from those barren and thorny questions and disputes that have infected the whole of theology; and this at a time when the greatest part of divines and professors, and those of no small reputation, engaging furiously in such controversies, have split into parties, and unhappily divided the whole world. It was my constant practice to establish those great and uncontroverted articles of our holy religion, which are but few and clear; some part whereof are confirmed by the common consent of nations, and of all the human race; and all the rest, by the unanimous voice of the whole Christian world. Of the first sort are those we have often advanced in treating of the being and perfections of the One Supreme and Eternal principle, and the production of all things by him; the continual preservation and government of the world by his providence; the law of God given to mankind, and the rewards and punishments annexed to it. The other class of the grand articles of religion are indeed peculiar to Christian philosophy, but believed in common by all the professors of that religion. These are the great foundations of our faith, and of all our hope and joy, with regard to the incarnation of the Son of God, his death and resurrection for the destruction of sin, and consequently of death; his ascension into the

* Celsior exurgens pluviis nimbosque cadentes.
Sub pedibus cernens, et cœca tonitrua calcans.

† Ὅτι ἐν καὶ μόνον ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἀγαθὸν ἡ εὐσέβεια.



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highest heavens with that same flesh of ours in which he died, and his exaltation there above all ranks of angels, dominions, and thrones, &c.; whence we expect he will return in great glory in that day, when he will be glorious in all his saints, and admired in those that believe. As many, therefore, as desire to receive him in this last manifestation, with joy and exultation, must of necessity be holy, and, in conformity to their most perfect and glorious Head, sober, pious, upright, and live in full contempt of this perishing, transitory world, their own mortal flesh, and the sordid pleasures of both: in a word, all the enjoyments which the mean and servile admire, they must trample under foot and despise. For, whoever will strive for this victory, and strive so as at last to obtain it, the Lord will own for his servant, and the great Master will acknowledge him for his disciple. He will attain a likeness to God in this earth, and, after a short conflict, will triumph in the Divine presence for ever. These are the doctrines which it is our interest to know, and in the observation of which our happiness will be secured. To these you will turn your thoughts, young gentlemen, if you are wise; nay, to these you ought to give due attention, that you may be wise. Those phantoms we catch at, fly away; this shadow of a life we now live, is likewise on the wing. Those things that are without the verge of sense, and above its reach, are the only solid and lasting enjoyments. "Why are ye fond of these earthly things," says St. Bernard, "which are neither true riches, nor are they yours? If they are yours," continues he, "take them with you."* And Lactantius admirably well observes, that "Whoever prefers the life of the soul, must of necessity despise that of the body; nor can he aspire to the highest good, unless he despise advantages of an inferior kind. For the all-wise God did not choose that we should attain to immortality in a soft, indolent way, but that we should gain that inexpressible reward of eternal life, with the highest difficulty and severest labor."† And that you may not be discouraged, remember the great Redeemer of souls, your exalted Captain, hath gone before you, and we have to do with an enemy already conquered. Let us only follow him with courage and activity, and we have no ground to doubt of victory. And indeed it is a victory truly worthy of a Christian, to subdue the barbarous train of our appetites, and subject them to the empire of reason and religion; while, on the other hand, it is the most shameful bondage, to have the more Divine part of our composition meanly subjected to an ignoble, earthly body. Now, this victory can only be secured by steadfast believing, vigorous opposition to our spiritual enemies, unwearied watching, and incessant prayer. Let prayer be not only the key that opens the day, and the lock that shuts out the night; but let it be also, from morning to night, our staff and stay in all our labors, and enable us to go cheerfully up into the mount of God. Prayer brings consolation to the languishing soul, drives away the devil, and is the great medium whereby all grace and peace is communicated to us. With regard to your reading, let it be your particular care to be familiarly acquainted with the sacred Scriptures above all other books whatever; for thence you will truly derive light for your direction and sacred provisions for your support on your journey. In subordination to these, you may also use the writings of pious men that are agreeable to them, for these also you may improve to your advantage; and particularly that little book of à Kempis, "*De Imitatione Christi*," since the sum and substance of religion consists in imitating the Being that is the object of your worship.

May our dear Redeemer Jesus impress upon your minds a lively representation of his own meek and immaculate heart, that, in that great and last day, he may, by this mark, know you to be his; and, together with all the rest of his sealed and redeemed ones, admit you into the mansions of eternal bliss! Amen.

*Let us pray.*

Eternal Creator and supreme Governor of the world, songs of praise are due to thee in Zion: nay, as thou art infinitely superior to all our songs and hymns, even silence in Zion redounds to thy praise. Let the societies of angels be rather employed in singing thy praises; but let us with silence and astonishment fall down at the footstool of thy throne, while they are taken up in the repetition of their celebrated doxology, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts*, who fillest the heaven and the earth with thy glory! But O that we had within us proper powers for exalting that most sacred Name! that name which, according to their measure, is celebrated by all the parts of this visible world which surrounds us, the heavens, the stars, the winds, the rivers, the earth, the ocean, and all the creatures therein. Thou surely didst at first implant in us souls and powers, for this purpose, superior to the rest of the visible creation: as we were then not only qualified to offer thee praises founded on the rational conviction of our minds, and animated by the affections of our hearts, but also capable of pronouncing more articulately even the praises that result from all the rest of thy visible works. But, alas! these heav-

* Quid terrena hæc amplectimini, quæ nec veræ divitiæ sunt, nec vestræ? Si vestræ sunt, tollite vobiscum.

† Quisquis animæ vitam maluerit, corporis vitam contemnat necesse est, nec aliter aspirare ad summum poterit bonum, nisi quæ sunt ima despexerit. Noluit enim sapientissimus Deus, nos immortalitatem delicate ac molliter assequi, sed ad illud vitæ æternæ inenarrabile præmium summa cum difficultate et magnis laboribus pervenire.

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only souls, these principles proceeding from a Divine original, we have most deeply immersed in mire and dirt; nor is any hand able to extricate them out of this mud, or cleanse them from their pollution, but thine. O most exalted and bountiful Father, if thou wilt graciously please to grant us this grace and favor, we shall then offer thee new songs of praise as incense, and ourselves thus renewed as a burnt offering: and all the rest of our time in this world we shall live, not to ourselves, but wholly to Him who died for us.

May thy church throughout the whole earth, and especially in these islands, be supported by thy most powerful hand, and continually be made to rejoice in the light of thy gracious countenance. Let our king be joyful in thee; as he depends on thy bounty, let him never be moved; let his throne be established in piety and righteousness, and let peace, and the gospel of peace, be the constant blessings of these kingdoms, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom, with thee, and the Holy Spirit, be praise, honor, and glory, now, and for evermore. Amen.

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# A MODEST DEFENCE OF MODERATE EPISCOPACY,

## AS ESTABLISHED IN SCOTLAND AT THE RESTORATION OF KING CHARLES II.

Episcopal government, managed in conjunction with presbyters, presbyteries, and synods, is not contrary to the rule of Scripture, or the example of the primitive church, but most agreeable to both.

Yea, it is not contrary to that new covenant, which is pretended by so many as the main, if not the only, reason of their scrupling; and for their sakes it is necessary to add this: for notwithstanding the many irregularities both in the matter and form of that covenant, and in the illegal and violent ways of pressing and prosecuting of it, yet, to them who still remain under the conscience of its full force and obligation, and in that some are inconvincibly persuaded, it is certainly most pertinent, if it be true, to declare the consistence of the present government even with that obligation.

And as both of these assertions, I believe, upon the exactest (if impartial and impassionate) inquiry, will be found to be in themselves true, so they are owned by the generality of the presbyterians in England, as themselves have published their opinions in print, with this title, *Two papers of proposals, humbly presented to his majesty, by the reverend ministers of the presbyterian persuasion.* Printed at London, anno 1661.

Besides other passages in those papers to the same purpose, in pages 11 and 12, are these words: "And as these are our general ends and motives, so we are induced to insist upon the form of a synodical government, conjunct with a fixed presidency or episcopacy; for these reasons:

"1. We have reason to believe that no other terms will be so generally agreed on, *&c.*

"2. It being agreeable to the Scripture and the primitive government, is likeliest to be the way of a more universal concord, if ever the churches on earth arrive at such a blessing; however, it will be most acceptable to God and well-informed consciences.

"3. It will promote the practice of discipline and godliness without discord, and promote order without hindering discipline and godliness.

"4. And it is not to be silenced (though in some respects we are loath to mention it), that it will save the nations from the violation of the solemn vow and covenant, without wronging the church at all, or breaking any other oath," *&c.*

And a little after, they add, that "the prelacy disclaimed in that covenant, was the engrossing the sole power of ordination and jurisdiction, and exercising of the whole discipline, absolutely by bishops themselves, and their delegates, chancellors, surrogates, and officials, &c., excluding wholly the pastors of particular churches from all share in it."

And there is one of prime note among them, who, in a large treatise of church government, does clearly evidence, that this was the mind both of the parliament of England, and of the assembly of divines at Westminster, as they themselves did expressly declare it in the admitting of the covenant, that "they understood it not to be against all episcopacy, but only against that particular frame," as it is worded in the article itself.* As for our present model in Scotland, and the way of managing it, whatsoever is amiss (and it can be no wrong to make that supposition concerning any church on earth), the brethren that are dissatisfied had possibly better acquitted their duty, by

* Baxter of Church Government, P. III., c. 1, tit., page 275. "An episcopacy desirable for the reformation, preservation, and peace of the churches, a fixed president, *durante vitâ.*" See pp. 297, and 330 ibid.

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free admonitions and significations of their own sense in all things, than by leaving their stations, which is the only thing that has made the breach, I fear, very hard to cure, and, in human appearance, near to incurable. But there is much charity due to those following their own consciences; and they owe, and I hope they pay, the same back again to those that do the same another way. And whatsoever may be the readiest and happiest way of reuniting those that are naturally so minded, the Lord reveal it to them in due time.

This one word I shall add: that this difference should arise to a great height, may seem somewhat strange to any man that calmly considers, that there is in this church no change at all, neither in the doctrine nor worship: no, nor in the substance of the discipline itself. But when it falls on matter easily inflammable, a little spark how great a fire it will kindle!

Oh! who would not long for the shadows of the evening, from all these poor childish contests!

But some will say, that we are engaged against prelacy by covenant, and therefore can not yield to so much as you do, without perjury.

*Ans.* That this is wholly untrue I thus demonstrate: I. When that covenant was presented to the assembly with the bare name of prelacy joined to popery, many contrary and reverend divines desired that the word (prelacy) might be explained, because it was not all episcopacy they were against; and thereupon the following clause, in the parenthesis, was given by way of explication, in these words: (That the church government by archbishops, bishops, their chancellors, and commissaries, deans, and chapters, archdeacons, and all other ecclesiastical officers depending on that hierarchy.) By which it appears, that it was only the English hierarchy or frame, that was covenanted against; and that which was then existent, that was taken down.

II. When the house of lords took the covenant, Mr. Thomas Coleman, that gave it them, did so explain it, and profess that it was not their intent to covenant against all episcopacy; and upon this explication it was taken; and certainly the parliament was most capable of giving the due sense of it, seeing it was they that did impose it.

III. And it could not be all episcopacy that was excluded, because a parochial episcopacy was at that same time used and approved commonly in England.

IV. And in Scotland they had used the help of visiters, for the reformation of their churches, committing the care of a country or circuit to some one man, which was as high a sort of episcopacy at least as any I am pleading for: besides that they had moderators in all their synods, which were temporary bishops.

V. Also, the chief divines of the late assembly at Westminster, that recommended that covenant to the nations, have professed their own judgment for such a moderate episcopacy as I am here defending, and therefore they never intended the exclusion of this by covenant.

After the same author saith, "As we have prelacy to be aware of, so we have the contrary extreme to avoid; and the church's peace, if it may be so procured; and as we must not take down the ministry lest it prepare men for episcopacy, so neither must we be against any profitable use and exercise of the ministry, or desirable order among them, for fear of introducing prelacy," &c.

There is another that has wrote a treatise on purpose, and that zealous enough, concerning the obligation of the league and covenant, under the name of Theophilus Timercus, and yet therein it is expressly asserted, that however at first view it might appear, that the parliament had renounced all episcopacy, yet, upon exacter inquiry, it was evident to the author that that very scruple was made by some members in parliament, and resolved, with the consent of their brethren in Scotland, that the covenant was only intended against prelacy as it was then in being in England, leaving a latitude for episcopacy, &c.

It would be noted, that when that covenant was framed, there was no episcopacy at all in being in Scotland, but in England only so that the extirpation of that frame only could then be merely intended.

Likewise, it would be considered of, though there is in Scotland at present the name of dean and chapter and commissaries, yet, that none of these do exercise at all any part of the discipline under that name, neither any other, as chancellor, or surrogate, &c., by delegation from bishops, with total exclusion of the community of presbyters from all power and share in it; which is the greatest point of difference between that model and this with us, and imports so much as to the main of discipline.

I do not deny that the generality of the people, even of ministers in Scotland, when they took the covenant, did understand that article as against all episcopacy whatsoever, even the most moderate: especially if it should be restored under the express name of bishops and archbishops; never considering how different the nature and model, and way of exercising it, might be thought on under these names, and that the due regulating of the thing is much more to be regarded than either the returning or altering the name. But though they did not then consider any such thing, yet certainly it concerns them now to consider it, when it is represented to them that not only the words of the oath itself do very genuinely consist with such a qualified and distinctive sense, but that the very composers and imposers

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of it, or a considerable part of them, did so understand and intend it. And unless they can make it appear that the episcopacy now in question with us in Scotland is either contrary to the word of God, or to that mitigated sense of their own oath, it would seem more suitable to Christian charity and moderation, rather to yield to it, as tolerable at least, than to continue so inflexibly to their first mistakes, and excessive zeal for love of it, as to divide from the church, and break the bond of peace.

It may likewise be granted, that some learned men in England, who have refused to take the covenant, did possibly except against that article of it, as signifying the total renunciation and abolition of episcopacy, and seeing that it was the real event and consequence of it, and they having many other strong and weighty reasons for refusing it, it is no wonder that they were little curious to inquire what passed among the contrivers of it, and what distinction, or different senses, either the words of that article might admit, or those contrivers might intend by them.

And the truth is, that, besides many other evils, the iniquity and unhappiness of such oaths and covenants lie much in this, that being commonly framed by persons that, even among themselves, are not fully of one mind, but have their different opinions and interests to serve (and it was so even in this), they commonly patch up so many several articles and clauses, and those, too, of so versatile and ambiguous terms, that they prove most wretched snares and thickets of briers and thorns to the consciences of those who are engaged in them, and matter of endless contentions and disputes among them, about the true sense and intendment, and the ties and obligations of those doubtful clauses: especially in such alterations and revolutions of affairs as always may, and often do, even within few years, follow after them; for the models and productions of such devices are not usually long-lived. And whatsoever may be said for their excuse in whole or in part, who, in yielding to the power that pressed it, and the general opinion of this church at that time, did take that covenant in the most moderate and least least schismatical sense that the terms can admit; yet I know not what can be said to clear them of a very great sin, that not only framed such an engine, but violently imposed it upon all ranks of men; not ministers and other public persons only, but the whole body and community, to such a hodge-podge of things of various concernments, religious and civil, as church discipline and government, the privileges of parliaments, and liberties of subjects, and condign punishment of malignants—things hard enough for the wisest and learnedest to draw the just lines of, and to give plain definitions and decisions of them, and therefore certainly as far off from the reach of poor country people's understanding, as from the true interest of their souls. And yet to tie them by a religious oath, either to know all, or to contend for them blindfold, without knowing of them where will there be instanced a greater oppression and tyranny over consciences than this? Certainly, they that now govern in this church can not be charged with anything near or like unto it: for whatsoever they require of intrants to the ministry, they require neither subscriptions nor oaths of ministers already entered, and far less of the whole body of the people. And it were ingenuously done to take some notice of any point of moderation, or whatsoever else is really commendable, even in those we account our greatest enemies, and not to take any party in the world for the absolute standard and unfailing rule of truth and righteousness in all things.

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# A FRAGMENT ON EZRA IX.

Our joys and griefs are the pulse of our hearts, and tell the temper of them. Earthly joy and sorrow take deep with an earthly heart, but little affect that which is spiritual and heavenly; and in this, those prayers and griefs are strong that arise from spiritual causes, which most of men scarcely feel at all: yea, a holy heart stays not in its own interest, in its mourning or rejoicing, but hath more sense even of other men's sins, than commonly they themselves who are guilty. *Rivers of waters*, says David, *run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.* Psalm cxix. 136. Of this same temper was this holy man. Oh! how would a few, how would one such person in a congregation, advance the work of a public fast, more than hundreds of us! And such an one's silence speaks more than all our noises; his *sitting astonished till the evening sacrifice.* Little, shallow griefs find the tongue more readily, but the greater are not of so easy vent, but stop awhile though pressing to be out, as a full vessel with a narrow mouth. It was so with Ezra's sorrow for the people's sin; but when it gets out, it springs upward with the greater force, even up to heaven. *I fell on my knees, and spread out my hands to the*

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*Lord my God, and said*, Oh! my God, *I am ashamed, our iniquities are increased over our heads*:—q. d., These cover me with shame, and I blush to lift up my face to those heavens whither our iniquities are gone up before: when I would look to thee, I spy our horrible transgressions got thither first, and mutiny of the people, thereby engaging such droves of poor ignorant persons to they know not what, and (to speak freely) standing before thee and accusing us. *Our transgression is grown up to heaven.* It hath had a long time to grow in, and all that time hath been incessantly growing, and therefore grown so high. *Since the days of our fathers we have been in this trespass.* Generations pass, but yet your sins abide. When the succeeding generation follows on in it, the former sins are reserved, and the latter added to them, and so they are kept alive. Thus they *grow*. This fills up the measure, and ripens a people for judgment, that is filling and growing all the while suitable to the sin, till it be poured out. Hence public calamities and long-lasting judgments on people.

Now these two things aggravate: great judgments inflicted, and great deliverances granted. Yet after both, this people had forsaken God's commandments. *And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this.* Is not this just our case? Have we not been sharply scourged, though indeed far less than our iniquities, and have we not been seasonably and wonderfully delivered in our extremities? And yet have we not again broken his commandments? And do we not still generally and grossly continue so doing! Oh! what shall we say to our God? *We can not stand before him, because of this.* Let us, therefore, fall down before him, and confess, and supplicate; and there is yet hope that he will be gracious.

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# CHARGES

## TO THE CLERGY OF THE DIOCESAN SYNOD OF DUNBLANE.

### I. *Bishop Leighton's Charge to his Clergy, Sept.* 1662.

#### FOR DISCIPLINE.

First, That all diligence be used for the repressing of profaneness, and for the advancement of solid piety.

Secondly, That not only scandals of unchastity, but drunkenness, swearing, cursing, filthy speaking, and mocking of religion, and all other gross offences, be brought under church censure.

Thirdly, That scandalous offenders be not absolved till there appear in them very probable signs of true repentance.

Fourthly, That inquiry be made by the minister, not only into the knowledge, but the practice and track of life, of those who are to be admitted to the holy communion; and all profane and evidently impenitent persons be secluded till their better conversation and obedience to the gospel be more apparent.

Fifthly, That family prayer be inquired after; and they that can, be exhorted to join with it reading of the Scriptures.

#### FOR WORSHIP.

First, That instead of lecturing and preaching both at one meeting, larger portions of the Holy Scriptures, one whole chapter at least of each Testament, and Psalms withal, be constantly read; and this not as a by-work, while they are convening, but after the people are well convened, and the worship solemnly begun with confession of sins and prayer, either by the minister or some fit person by him appointed.

Secondly, That the Lord's Prayer be restored to more frequent use; likewise the doxology and the creed.

Thirdly, That daily public prayer, in churches, morning and evening, with reading of the Scriptures, be used where it can be had conveniently, and the people be exhorted to frequent them; not so as to think that this should excuse them from daily private prayer in their families and in secret, but rather as a help to enable them and dispose them the more for both these: and let the constant use of secret prayer be recommended to all persons, as the great instrument of sanctifying the soul, and of entertaining and increasing it in the love of God.

Fourthly, That the younger sort and the ignorant be diligently catechised, at fit times, all the year through; and that work not wholly laid over on some days or weeks before the celebration of the communion; but that the inquiry, at that time, be rather of their good conversation, and due disposition for partaking of that holy ordinance, as was said before in an article touching discipline.

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Fifthly, That ministers use some short form of catechism, such as they may require account of, till a common form be agreed on.

Sixthly, That preaching be plain and useful for all capacities; not entangled wth useless questions and disputes, nor continued to a wearisome length; the great and most necessary principles of religion, most frequently treated upon: and oftentime larger portions of Scripture explained, and suitable instructions and exhortations thence deduced; and let that be the sermon at that time; which will doubtless be as truly preaching, and as useful, if not more so, than insisting, for a whole sermon or more, upon one short verse or sentence.

The bishop propounded to the brethren, that it was to be remembered, by himself and them both, to how eminent degrees of purity of heart and life their holy calling doth engage them; to how great contempt of this present world, and inflamed affections toward heaven, springing from deep persuasions within them of those things they preach to others, and from the daily meditation of them, and fervent prayer: and that they consider how ill it becomes them to be much in the trivial conversation of the world; but, when their duty or necessity involves them in company, that their speech and deportment be exemplarily holy, ministering grace to those with whom they converse: and (to add but this one thing, so suitable to ministers of the gospel of peace) that they be meek and gentle, and lovers and exhorters of peace, private and public, among all ranks of men; endeavoring rather to quench than to increase the useless debates and contentions that abound in the world; and that they be always more studious of pacific than polemic divinity, that certainly being much diviner than this, for the students of it are called the *sons of God.* Matt. v. 9.

II. *The Bishop's Address after the business was over, October,* 1665.

After the affairs of the synod were ended, the bishop showed the brethren he had somewhat to impart to them that concerned himself, which, though it imported little or nothing, either to them or the church, yet he judged it his duty to acquaint them with; and it was, the resolution he had taken of retiring from this public charge; and that all the account he could give of the reasons moving him to it, was briefly this: the sense he had of his own unworthiness of so high a station in the church, and his weariness of the contentions of this church, which seemed rather to be growing than abating, and, by their growth, did make so great abatements of that Christian meekness and mutual charity, that is so much more worth than the whole sum of all that we contend about. He thanked the brethren for all their underserved respect and kindness manifested to himself all along; and desired their good construction of the poor endeavors he had used to serve them, and to assist them in promoting the work of the ministry, and the great designs of the gospel, in their bounds; and if, in anything, in word or deed, he had offended them, or any of them, he very earnestly and humbly craved their pardon; and having recommended to them to continue in the study of peace and holiness, and of ardent love to our great Lord and Master, and to the souls he hath so dearly bought, he closed with these words of the apostle: "Finally, brethren, farewell: be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, and live in peace; and the God of peace and love shall be with you."

III. *The Bishop's Charge, October,* 1666.

1. It was enacted, that all the ministers do endeavor to bring their people to a high esteem of the Holy Scriptures, and of the reading of them in public; and to give evidence thereof, by reverent and attentive hearing, none being permitted to stand about the doors, or lie in the kirkyard, during the time of reading; and if, after warning given them of this, any shall be found to continue in the same disorder, they are, by due rebukes and censures, to be brought to obedience.

2. That the ministers be careful to direct the readers what parts of the Scriptures are most frequently to be read: as, the histories of the gospel, and the epistles; and of the Old Testament, the most intelligible and practicable parts, particularly large portions of the Psalms at all times, being both so excellently instructive, and withal so divine forms of prayers and praises, and therefore have been so much used by the Christian churches in all ages, and always made so great a part of their public service.

3. That no readers be permitted, but such as are tried and approved by the presbytery.

4. That, besides the reading between the second and third bell, which is but as in the interval for those that are come, till the rest do convene, some part of the Scriptures be read after the last bell is rung out, and the congregation more fully met, and the minister is come in: either by himself, or by the reader at his appointment; one chapter at least, together with some of the Psalms, one or more, as they are of length, and of which some part afterward may be sung, and so the people shall the better understand what they sing. Thus shall this so useful ordinance of public reading of the Scriptures be performed with more solemnity, and brought into greater respect and veneration, and the people be more universally and plentifully edified by it. But, together with this, the reciting of the ten commandments, the belief, according to the acts of former synods, is no Lord's day to be omitted. Nor is this only or mainly meant as a help to the people's learning the words of them, and so being able to repeat them,

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but as a solemn publication of the law of God, as the rule of our life, and a solemn profession of our believing the articles of our Christian faith, and for the quickening of our affections toward both.

And as to that exercise of reading the Scriptures, it can not be imagined that any well-instructed and solid-minded Christian can question the great expediency and usefulness of it for all ranks of people: for, besides that many of our commons can not read, and so can not use the Scriptures in private, and too many that can, yet do neglect it; even they that use them most in private, will not only no whit the less, but so much the more, be well satisfied and edified with hearing them read in public, and will more reverently and religiously attend to them, and, with the blessing of God upon them so doing, not fail to find (what others can say they have often found) divers passages and sentences falling frequently in upon their hearts in public reading, with particular warmth and Divine force, nothing below, if not sometimes beyond, what they usually find in private.

If the minister think fit to make his sermon for the time, upon some part of what, by himself, or by his appointment, hath been read, it may do well; and possibly so much the better, the longer the text be, and the shorter the sermon be; for it is greatly to be suspected that our usual way of very short texts, and very long sermons, is apt to weary people more, and profit them less.

But, whatsoever they do in this, they should beware of returning to their long expositions, besides their sermon, at one and the same meeting; which, besides the tediousness and other inconveniences, is apt to foment in people's minds the foolish prejudice and proud disdain they have taken against the Scriptures read without a superadded discourse: in which conceit, for all their zeal against popery, they seem to be too much of the Romish opinion, as accounting the Holy Scriptures so obscure in themselves, that it is someway dangerous, or at least altogether unprofitable, to intrust the common people either with reading or hearing any part of them at any time, unless they be backed with continual expositions.

5. That ministers do endeavor to reduce the people from the irreverent deportment they have generally contracted in the public worship; particularly from their most indecent sitting at prayer, to kneel or stand, as conveniently they may, that we may worship, both with our bodies and with our souls, Him that made both, and made them for that very end. Oh! how needful is that invitatory to be often rung in our ears, that seem wholly to have forgot it! "Oh! come, and let us worship and bow down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker."

6. That people be frequently and earnestly exhorted to morning and evening prayer in their families, especially the prime families in parishes, as most exemplary.

7. That the way of catechising be more adapted to the capacity of our rude and ignorant people; and that our sermons, particularly those of the afternoon, may be more frequently bestowed on the most plain and intelligible way of explaining some point of catechetical doctrine.

8. It was recommended, that convenient utensils be provided in every kirk, for the administration of the holy sacraments.

9. That, according to our great and standing duty, we be still more and more zealous and careful, by doctrine and discipline, to purge out all profaneness; particularly the most common and crying sins, as drunkenness, cursing, swearings, railing, and bitter speaking, and rotten, filthy speaking, so usual among the common sort, in their house or field labor together, particularly in harvest: and that it be by all ministers recommended to the owners of the crops, and overseers of the reapers, to range them so to their work, and in such divisions, as may give least occasion to anything of that kind.

10. That, as we ourselves should be exemplary in holiness, we should endeavor that our *seniores plebis*, or elders of the people, be so too; and, for that end, rather to have them well chosen, though fewer, than a great number of such as too often they are.

11. That the presbyteries do inquire of each one of their number concerning the celebration of the communion, that at least our usual returns of it be neglected by none; for it is one of the great defects and reproaches of our church, that that great ordinance, being so useful for the increase of holiness, should be so seldom administered, as with us it is, even where it is oftenest. For the way of examination in order to it, somewhat is set down in our first synod, which may be looked at, if possibly it may prove to be of any use.

## IV. *Paper given in by the Bishop to the Synod, April*, 1667.

I CONFESS that my own inactive and unmeddling temper may be too apt to prevail against the known duty of my station, and may incline me rather to inquire too little than too much into the deportment of others; and rather to be deficient, than to exceed in admonitions and advices to my brethren, in matters of their duty: and, besides this natural aversion, the sense of my own great unworthiness and nitniness, may give me check, and be a very strong curb upon me, in censuring others for what may be amiss, or in offering any rules for the redress of it. And there is yet another consideration, that bends still further that way; for I am so desirous to keep far off from the reach of that prejudice that abounds in these parts against the very name of my sacred function, as apt to command and domineer too much, that I may possibly err on the other hand, and scarcely perform the duty of the lowest and most moderate kind of mod

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erator; so that I am forced to spur and drive up myself against all these retardments, to suggest anything, how useful soever, beyond our road or accustomed way, especially finding how little anything of that kind takes, and prevails to any real effect.

However, when anything appears to me of evident reason and usefulness, and that easily joins in, and paceth with, our standing customs, I judge it my duty to offer it to you; and I hope, if that ye shall find it of any use, ye will not reject it, but rather improve it to somewhat better, that by occasion of it may arise in your own thoughts.

Something of this kind I have formerly moved, concerning the way of dealing with persons fallen into scandalous sin: frequent speaking with them in private, to the convincing and awakening their consciences to a lively sense of sin, and directing them in the exercises of repentance, and exhorting them to set apart some time for the solid humbling of their souls in fasting and prayer; and not to admit them to public confession, until they have, to our best discerning, some real heart-sense of sin, and remorse for it, and serious purposes of newness of life.

Likewise, I suggested somewhat touching the way of examining of all persons, toward their admission to the holy communion, besides the ordinary way of catechising the younger and more ignorant sort; and some other particulars much like these, that now I will not repeat.

That which I would recommend at this time, relates to the business of *privy trials* (as they are called) of ministers in their presbyteries, toward the time of the synod; in which I have perceived, in some places (if I may be pardoned that free word), very much of superficial, empty form; for the help of which, besides other ways which might be thought on, that which occurs to me at present, is this: That some certain questions be asked of every minister before he withdraws; and these be much the same with those that usually are, or fitly may be, propounded to the elders and people concerning their ministers, at the visitation of particular kirks. For though, in the case we now speak of, we can have nothing but every man's own word concerning himself, yet this does not render it a useless thing: for, besides that divers of the questions will be of things so obvious to public knowledge, that no man will readily adventure to give an untrue answer, where it may be so readily traced, there is much to be given to the presumed ingenuity and vivacity of a minister, especially in what is solemnly and punctually inquired of him; and whatsoever, formerly, hath been, or hath not been, his former degree of diligence in the particulars, the very inquiry and asking concerning them, will be apt to awake, in every man, a more serious reflection upon himself touching each point; and the drawing forth such an express answer to each before his brethren, will probably excite and engage him to higher exactness in all of them for the time to come.

The particulars I conceive may be these, and such others like them, as may be further thought fit.

1. Whether he be constantly assiduous in plain and profitable preaching, instructing, and exhorting, and reproving, most expressly and frequently, those sins that abound most among his people; and in all things, to his best skill, fitting his doctrine to the capacities, necessities, and edification of all sorts within his charge?

2. Whether he be diligent in catechising, employing throughout the year such seasons and times for it, as may be easiest and fittest for the people to attend it, and not wholly casting it over upon some few days or weeks near the time of the communion.

3. How often in the year he celebrates the holy communion? For I am ashamed to say, whether, at least, once every year?

4. Whether he does faithfully and impartially exercise discipline, and bring all known scandals to due censure; and does speak privately, and that oftener than once, with the persons convicted, and admits them not to public acknowledgment, till he sees in them some probable signs of true repentance?

5. Whether he be diligent, by himself and his elders, in all convenient ways, to know the deportment of the several families and persons of his flock: and do frequently visit the families, and not only ask, but do his best certainly to inform himself, whether they constantly use morning and evening prayer, together with reading of the Scriptures, if they have any that can do it; and whether this point of family exercise be specially provided for in the choice families in the parish?

6. Whether he be careful of the relief of the poor, and of visiting the sick, whensoever he knows of any, even though they neglect to send for him; and for this end make inquiry, and the rather prevent their sending, because they commonly defer that, till it can be of little or no use to them?

7. Whether he does in private plainly and freely admonish those he knows, or hath cause to suspect, to be given to uncleanness, or drunkenness, or swearing, or any kind of inordinate walking, especially if they be of that quality that engages him frequently to converse with them; and if they continue such, leaves off that converse; and if their miscarriage be public, brings them to public censure?

8. Whether he watches exactly over his own conversation in all things, that he not only give no offence, but be an example to the flock, and preach by living?

9. Whether he spend the greatest portions of his time in private, in reading, and prayer, and meditation—a thing so necessary to enable him for all the other parts of his duty?

10. Whether he makes it the great business,



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and withal the great pleasure of his life, to fulfil the work of his ministry, in the several parts and duties of it, out of love to God, and to the souls of his people?

11. If he does not only avoid gross offences (which, in a guide of souls were intolerable), but studies daily to mortify pride, and rash anger, and vain-glory, and covetousness, and love of this world and of sensual pleasures, and self-love, and all inordinate passions and affections, even in those instances wherein they are subtilest and least discernible by others, and commonly too little discerned by ourselves?

12. If he not only lives in peace with his brethren and flock, and withal as much as is possible, but is an ardent lover, and promoter of it, reconciling differences, and preserving good agreement, all he can, amongst his people?

It hath not escaped my thoughts, that some of these questions, being of things more inward, may seem less fit to be publicly propounded to any; and that the best observers of them will, both out of modesty, and real humility, and severe judging of themselves, be aptest to charge themselves with deficiency in them, and will only own, at most, sincere desires and endeavor, which, likewise, they that practise and mind them least may in general profess: neither is there any more particular and punctual account to be expected of such things of any man in public: but the main intent in these (as was said before), is, serious reflection, and that each of us may be stirred up to ask ourselves over again these and more of the like questions, in our most private trials, and our secret scrutinies of our own hearts and lives, and may redouble our diligence in purging ourselves, that we may be in the house of God vessels of honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared to every good work. And, for those other things more exposed to the knowledge of others, if any brother hears of the faultiness in any of the number, he shall not do well to think rudely to vent it in the meeting, till first he have made all due inquiry after the truth of it; yea, though he hath it upon inquiry to be true, yet ought he not, even then, to make his first essay of rectifying his brother, by a declaration to the full meeting, without having formerly admonished him, first alone, and then (according to our Savior's rule) in the presence of one or two more; but having done so, if neither of these reclaim him, then follows of necessity to tell the church: but that is likewise to be done with great singleness of heart, and charity and compassion; and the whole procedure of the whole company, with the person so delated, is to be managed with the same temper, according to the excellent advice of the apostle, "My brethren, if any man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Gal. vi. 2.

V. *Paper given in by the Bishop to the Synod, October* 1667, *containing Proposal touching the following things:*

1. Solemn reading of the Scriptures.
2. Reducing the people to a reverend gesture in prayer.
3. Plain, and practical, and catechetical preaching.
4. A weekly day for catechising, and the reading of the Scriptures joined with it.
5. A short and plain form of catechism.
6. A more exact and spiritual way of dealing with public penitents.
7. As likewise of preparing people for the communion; more frequent celebration whereof is so much to be wished, but so little, or scarce at all, to be hoped in this church.
8. That, in preaching, the most abounding and crying sins be more sharply and frequently reproved, particularly cursing and swearing, and the worship of God in families more urged.
9. The due educating and moulding the minds of young students in presbyteries.
10. More frequent and more exact visitation of churches: and the visiting of families by each minister in his own charge.

The words of the paper were as follow:—

1. That the reading of the Holy Scriptures in our public meetings, when they are solemnest and fullest, be constantly used, and that we endeavor to bring our people to a reverend and affectionate esteem of that ordinance, and attention to it.

2. That both by our own example, and by frequent instruction and exhortation, we study to reform that extreme irreverence and indecency that hath generally prevailed in people's deportment in time of public worship, and particularly in prayer: and that they be reduced to such a gesture, as may signify that we are acknowledging and adoring the great Majesty of God.

3. That we endeavor to adopt our way of preaching, with all evidence and plainness, to the informing of the people's minds, and quickening their affections, and raising in them renewed purposes of a Christian life: and that some part of our sermons be designed for the plain and practical explication of the great principles of religion.

4. That we fix some certain times, at least one day in the week, throughout the year, for catechising, and that, withal, there be reading of the Scriptures and prayer at the same time; to which, besides that part of the people that are for each time particularly warned to be present, those others that are near the church and at leisure may resort. For the work of the ministry is a husbandry of more continual labor and attendance than that of our country people that labor the ground, and therefore can not well be duly discharged if it be wholly cast over upon the Lord's day, without ever meeting with them or bringing any considerable part of them together, all the week long.

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5. It seems absolutely necessary, that each minister should resolve on some short and plain form of catechism, for the use of his people: for it is not, I think, to be imagined, that ever people will have any fixed knowledge of the articles of religion, by lax and continually varied discourses and forms, or by catechisms too long and too hard for them. And would some person draw up several short forms, they might be revised at the next synod, and possibly one framed out of them, which, by consent, might be appointed for the use of this diocese, for the interim, till one shall be published for the whole church.

6. That which hath been formerly proposed, should be reminded, of a more exact and spiritual way of dealing with public offenders, that their reception might be both more apt to recover the penitents themselves, and to edify the church.

7. For more frequent communion (if it could be had), or however, for the better improving it when we have it, seldom as it is, what hath been formerly suggested touching the way of examining and preparing people to it, and other particulars relating thereto, need not be repeated but need very much to be really practised, if they can be of any use.

8. Likewise, enough hath been formerly said (it were well if anything might once appear to be done), touching the worship of God in families, especially the prime ones within our bounds: as likewise touching the exercise of discipline for the repressing of swearing and drunkenness, and all profaneness, so much abounding everywhere; and that our doctrine be likewise more particularly and frequently applied to that purpose.

9. Something hath likewise been said concerning the training up of such young men among us as intend the ministry, not only as to their strain of preaching, but the moulding of their minds to more inward thoughts, and the study of a devout life, and more acquaintance with the exercises of mortification and purging of their own hearts by those Divine truths which they are to preach to others for the same purpose: for how shall they teach what they have not learned?

10. That churches be more frequently and exactly visited, and, by each minister, the families of his congregation.

This paper being publicly read, and consented to, and approved by the unanimous vote of the synod, conformably to it was framed the following act.

The bishop and synod having seriously considered the height of profaneness and gross sins abounding among their people, particularly drunkenness and uncleanness, and most universally the heinous sin of cursing and swearing, and that which foments and increases those and all sins, the great contempt of the Lord's holy day and ordinances, and the gross and almost incredible ignorance of the common sort, under so much assiduous preaching and catechising; for the more effectual redress of all these evils, have agreed and resolved, through the Lord's help, each one within himself, to stir the grace and zeal of God that is within him, to renewed vigor and fervor, and more earnest endeavor in the use of all due means for that effect: and particularly,

1. The applying of their sermons and doctrines more expressly and frequently to the reproof of those wickednesses, especially of that horrible sin which almost all ranks of men do more easily and frequently commit than they can possibly do other gross sins, and that with less sense and remorse—cursing and swearing: and that they will, by God's assistance, not only use short and frequent reproofs of this and other sins, but at sometimes more largely insist in representing the exceeding sinfulness and vileness of such a particular sin, and the great danger of the Lord's wrath and heaviest judgments upon those that persist in it.

2. That with this they will join constant private inspection over the lives of their people, and, by all due means, particularly inquire into them; and when they find any one guilty of any gross sin, privately to admonish him, meekly and affectionately, but yet with all freedom and plainness; and if upon that they mend not, to proceed in the regular way of discipline and censure within their own charge; and if they be not by that reclaimed, but prove obstinate, then to delate them to the highest judicature, in the usual order of this church.

3. To use more frequent catechising, and that in so plain a method and way as may be most apt both to inform the minds of the most ignorant, and, through the blessing of God, to make more deep impression upon their hearts.

4. That, as much as is competent for ministers, they will endeavor to procure the executing of those penal laws made against cursing and swearing, and other scandalous offences, in such a way as may be most convenient and feasible in each of their respective parishes.

5. That they will endeavor, both by exhortation, and, where need is, by use of discipline, to bring their people to more careful and constant attendance on all the ordinances of God at all times of the accustomed public meetings, and to a more religious and reverend deportment in them throughout the whole, but particularly in time of prayer.

6. That they be particularly careful to inquire after the daily performance of the worship of God in families, and, where they find it wanting, to enjoin it, and make inquiry again after it; and this should be especially provided for in the choice and most eminent families in the several congregations, as exemplary to all the rest.

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VI. *Concluding Paragraph, April*, 1668.

The bishop, having commended the brethren for their unity, and concord, and good conversation, exhorted them to continue therein, and to be more and more exemplary in holiness, and in modesty and gravity, even in the externals of their hair and habit, and their whole deportment; and to the regulating of their children, and their whole families, to be patterns of religion and sobriety to all about them; and that they themselves aspire daily to greater abstraction from the world, and contempt of things below; giving themselves wholly to their great work of watching over souls, for which they must give account; and to reading and meditation; and to prayer, that draws continual fresh supplies from heaven, to enable them for all these duties.

VII. *Paragraph respecting Baptismal Vows, October*, 1668.

That which had been sometime spoke of before, the bishop now again recommended o the brethren, that, at their set times of catechising and examining their people, they would take particular notice of young persons, toward their first admission to the holy communion; and, having before taken account of their knowledge of the grounds of religion, would then cause them, each one particularly and expressly to declare their belief of the Christian faith, into which, in their infancy, they were baptized; and, reminding them of that their baptismal vow, and the great engagements it lays upon them to a holy and Christian life, would require of them an explicit owning of that vow and engagement, and their solemn promise accordingly, to endeavor the observing and performance of it, in the whole course of their following life: and then, in their prayer with which they use to conclude those meetings, would recommend the said young persons, now thus engaged, to the effectual blessing of God, beseeching him to own them for his, and to bestow on them the sanctifying and strengthening grace of his Holy Spirit, as his signature upon them, sealing them to the day of redemption.

And this practice, as it hath nothing in it that can offend any, even the most scrupulous minds, so it may be a very fit suppletory of that defect in infant baptism, which the enemies of it do mainly object against it, and may, through the blessing of God, make a lasting impression of religion upon the hearts of those young persons toward whom it is used, and effectually engage them to a Christian life; and, if they swerve from it, make them the more inexcusable and clearly convincible of their unfaithfulness and breach of that great promise and sacred vow, they have so renewed to God before his people. And for authority of divines, if we regard it, it hath the general approbation of the most famous reformers, and of the most pious and learned that have followed them since their time; and, being performed in that evangelical simplicity as it is here propounded, they do not only allow it as lawful, but desire it, and advise is as laudable and profitable, and of very good use, in all Christian churches.

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# RULES AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR A HOLY LIFE.

For disposing you the better to observe these rules, and profit by them, be pleased to take the following advices:—

1. Put all your trust in the special and singular mercy of God, that he for his mercy's sake, and of his only goodness, will help and bring you to perfection. Not that absolute perfection is attainable here, but the meaning is, to high degrees of that spiritual and divine life, which is always growing and tending toward the absolute perfection above; but in some persons comes nearer to that and riseth higher, even here, than in the most. If you with hearty and fervent desires do continually wish and long for it, and with most humble devotion daily pray unto God and call for it, and with all diligence do busily labor and travail to come to it, undoubtedly it shall be given you. For you must not think it sufficient to use exercises, as though they had such virtues in them, that of themselves alone, they could make such as do use them perfect; for neither those nor any other, whatever they be, can of themselves (by their use only) bring unto perfection. But our merciful Lord God, of his own goodness, when you seek with hearty desires and fervent sighings, maketh you to find it. When you ask daily with devout prayer, then he giveth it to you; and when you continually, with unwearied labor and travail, knock perseveringly, then he doth mercifully open unto you. And because those exercises do teach you to seek, ask, and knock, yea, they are none other than very devout petitions, seekings, and spiritual pulsations for the merciful help of God; therefore they are very profitable means to come to perfection by God's grace.

2. Let no particular exercise hinder your public and standing duties to God and your

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neighbors: but for these, rather intermit the other for a time, and then return to it as soon as you can.

3. If, in time of your spiritual exercise, you find yourself drawn to any better, or to as good a contemplation as that is, follow the track of that good motion so long as it shall last.

4. Always take care to follow such exercises of devout thoughts, withal putting in practice such lessons as they contain and excite to.

5. Though at first ye feel no sweetness in such exercises, yet be not discouraged, nor induced to leave them, but continue in them faithfully, whatsoever pain or spiritual trouble ye feel; for, doing them for God and his honor, and finding none other present fruit, yet you shall have an excellent reward for your diligent labor and your pure intentions. And let not your falling short of these models and rules, nor your daily manifold imperfections and faults, dishearten you; but continue steadfast in your desires, purposes, and endeavors; and ever ask the best, aim at the best, and hope the best, being sorry that you can do no better; and they shall be a most acceptable sacrifice in the sight of God, *and in due time you shall reap if you faint not.* And of all such instructions let your rule be, to follow them as much as you can; but not too scrupulously thinking your labor lost if you do not exactly and strictly answer them in everything. Purpose still better, and by God's grace all shall be well.

## SECTION I.

*Rule* 1. Exercise thyself in the knowledge and deep consideration of our Lord God, calling humbly to mind how excellent and incomprehensible he is; and this knowledge shalt thou rather endeavor to obtain by fervent desire and devout prayer, than by high study and outward labor. It is the singular gift of God, and certainly very precarious.

2. Pray, then, "Most gracious Lord, whom to know is the very bliss and felicity of man's soul, and yet none can know thee, unless thou wilt open and show thyself unto him; vouchsafe, of thy infinite mercy, now and ever, to enlighten my heart and mind to know thee, and thy most holy and perfect will, to the honor and glory of thy name. Amen."

3. Then lift up thy heart to consider (not with too great violence, but soberly) the eternal and infinite power of God, who has created all things by his excellent wisdom; his unmeasurable goodness, and incomprehensible love; for he is very and only God, most excellent, most high, most glorious, the everlasting and unchangeable goodness, an eternal substance, a charity infinite, so excellent and ineffable in himself, that all dignity, perfection, and goodness, that is possible to be spoken or thought of, can not sufficiently express the smallest part thereof.

4. Consider that he is the natural place, the centre and rest of thy soul. If thou then think of the most blessed Trinity, muse not too much thereon, but with devout and obedient faith, meekly and lowly adore and worship.

5. Consider Jesus the Redeemer and Husband of thy soul, and walk with him as becomes a chaste spouse, with reverence and lowly shamefulness, obedience and submission.

6. Then turn to the deep, profound consideration of thyself, thine own nothingness, and thy extreme defilement and pollution, thy natural aversion from God, and that thou must, by conversion to him again, and union with him, be made happy.

7. Consider thyself and all creatures as nothing, in comparison of thy Lord; that so thou mayest not only be content, but desirous to be unknown, or being known, to be contemned and despised of all men, yet without thy faults or deservings, as much as thou canst.

8. Pray: "O God, infuse into my heart thy heavenly light and blessed charity, that I may know and love thee above all things; and above all things loath and abhor myself. Grant that I may be so ravished in the wonder and love of thee, that I may forget myself and all things; feel neither prosperity nor adversity; may not fear to suffer all the pains of this world, rather than to be parted and pulled away from thee, whose perfections infinitely exceed all thought and understanding. O! let me find thee more inwardly and verily present with me, than I am with myself; and make me most circumspect how I do use myself in the presence of thee, my holy Lord.

"Cause me always to remember how everlasting and constant is the love thou bearest toward me, and such a charity and continual care, as though thou hadst no more creatures in heaven or earth besides me. What am I? A vile worm and filth."

9. Then aspire to a great contrition for thy sins, and hatred of them, an abhorring of thyself for them; then crave pardon in the blood of Jesus Christ; and then offer up thyself, soul and body, an oblation or sacrifice, in and through him: as they did of old, laying wood on the altar, and then burning up all: so this shall be a sacrifice of sweet savor, and very acceptable to God.

10. Offer all that thou hast, to be nothing, to use nothing of all that thou hast about thee and is called thine, but to his honor and glory; and resolve through his grace to use all the powers of thy soul, and every member of thy body, to his service, as formerly thou hast done to sin.

11. Consider the passion of thy Lord, how he was buffeted, scourged, reviled, stretched with nails on the cross, and hung on it three long hours; suffered all the contempt and shame, and all the inconceivable pain of it, for thy sake.

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12. Then turn thy heart to him, humbly saying, "Lord Jesus, whereas I daily fall, and am ready to sin, vouchsafe me grace as oft as I shall, to rise again; let me never presume, but always most meekly and humbly acknowledge my wretchedness and frailty, and repent, with a firm purpose to amend; and let me not despair because of my great frailty, but ever trust in thy most loving mercy and readiness to forgive."

## SECTION II.

1. Thou shalt have much to do in mortifying of thy five senses, which must be all shut up in the crucified humility of Jesus Christ, and be as they were plainly dead.

2. Thou must now learn to have a continued eye inwardly to thy soul and spiritual life, as thou hast used heretofore to have all thy mind and regard to outward pleasure and worldly things.

3. Thou must submit and give thyself up unto the discipline of Jesus, and become his scholar, resigning and compelling thyself altogether to obey him in all things; so that thy willing and nilling thou utterly and perfectly do cast away from thee, and do nothing without his license: at every word thou wilt speak, at every morsel thou wilt eat, at every stirring or moving of every article or member of thy body, thou must ask leave of him in thy heart, and ask thyself whether, having so done, that be according to his will and holy example, and with sincere intention of his glory. Hence,

4. Even the most necessary actions of thy life, though lawful, yet must thus be offered up with a true intention unto God, in the union of the most holy works, and blessed merits of Christ; saying, "Lord Jesus, bind up in the merits of thy blessed senses, all my feeling and sensation, and all my wits and senses, that I never hereafter use them to any sensuality."

5. Thus labor to come to this union and knitting up of thy senses, in God and thy Lord Jesus, and remain so fast to the cross, that thou never part from it, and still behave thy body and all thy senses as in the presence of thy Lord God, and commit all things to the most trusty providence of thy loving Lord, who will then order all things delectably and sweetly for thee. Reckon all things besides for right naught; and thus mayest thou come unto wonderful illuminations and spiritual influence from the Lord thy God.

6. If, for his love, thou canst crucify, renounce, and forsake perfectly thyself and all things, thou must so crucify thyself to all things, and love and desire God only, with thy care and whole heart, that in this most steadfast and strong knot and union unto the will of God, if he would create hell in thee here, thou mightst be ready to offer thyself, by his grace, for his eternal honor and glory, to suffer it, and that purely for his will and pleasure.

7. Thou must keep thy memory clean and pure, as it were a wedlock-chamber, from all strange thoughts, fancies, and imaginations; and it must be trimmed and adorned with holy meditations and virtues of Christ's life and passion, that God may continually and ever rest therein.

### A PRAYER.

8. "Lord, instead of knowing thee, I have sought to know wickedness and sin; and whereas my will and desire were created to love thee, I have lost that love, and declined to the creatures. While my memory ought to be filled with thee, I have painted it with the imagery of innumerable fancies, not only of all creatures, but of all sinful wickedness. Oh! blot out these by thy blood, and imprint thy own blessed image in my soul, blessed Jesus, by that blood that issued out from thy most loving heart, when thou hangedst on the cross. So knit my will to thy most holy will, that I may have no other will but thine, and may be most heartily and fully content with whatsoever thou wouldst do to me in this world; yea, if thou wilt, so that I hate thee not, nor sin against thee, but retain thy love, make me suffer the greatest pains."

## SECTION III.

*Rule* 1. Exercise thyself to the perfect abnegation of all things which may let or impede this union. Mortify in thee everything that is not of God, nor for God, or which he willeth and loveth not. Resigning and yielding up to the high pleasure of God all love and affection for transitory things, desire neither to have nor hold them, nor bestow nor give them, but only for the pure love and honor of God. Put away superfluous and unnecessary things, and affect not even things necessary.

2. Mortify all affection to and seeking of thyself, which is so natural to men in all the good they desire, and in all the good they do, and in all the evil they suffer: yea, by the inordinate love of the gifts and graces of God, instead of himself, they fall into spiritual pride, gluttony, and greediness.

3. Mortify all affection to, and delectation in, meat and drink, and vain thoughts and fancies, which, though they proceed not to consent, yet defile the soul, and grieve the Holy Ghost, and do great damage to the spiritual life.

4. Imprint on thy heart the image of Jesus crucified, the impressions of his humility, poverty, mildness, and all his holy virtues: let thy thoughts of him turn into affection, and thy knowledge into love. For the love of God doth most purely work in the mortification of nature: the life of the spirit, purifying the higher powers of the soul, begets

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the solitariness and departure from all creatures, and the influence and flowing into God.

5. Solitude, silence, and the strict keeping of the heart, are the foundations and grounds of a spiritual life.

6. Do all thy necessary and outward works without any trouble or carefulness of mind, and bear thy mind amid all always inwardly lifted up and elevated to God, following always more the inward exercise of love, than the outward acts of virtue.

7. To this can no man come, unless he be rid and delivered from all things under God, and be so swallowed up under God, that he can contemn and despise himself and all things; for the pure love of God maketh the spirit pure and simple, and so free, that, without any pain and labor, it can at all times turn and recollect itself in God.

8. Mortify all bitterness of heart toward thy neighbors, and all vain complacency in thyself, all vain glory and desire of esteem, in words and deeds, in gifts and graces. To this thou shalt come by a more clear and perfect knowledge and consideration of thy own vileness, and by knowing God to be the fountain of all grace and goodness.

9. Mortify all affection toward inward, sensible, spiritual delight in grace, and the following devotion with sensible sweetness in the lower faculties or powers of the soul, which are nowise real sanctity and holiness in themselves, but certain gifts of God to help our infirmity.

10. Mortify all curious investigation or search, all speculation and knowledge of unnecessary things, human or Divine; for the perfect life of a Christian consisteth not in a high knowledge, but profound meekness, in holy simplicity, and in the ardent love of God; wherein we ought to desire to die to all affection to ourselves and all things below God; yea, to sustain pain and dereliction, that we may be perfectly knit and united to God, and be perfectly swallowed up in him.

11. Mortify all undue scrupulousness of conscience, and trust in the goodness of God: for our doubting and scruples ofttimes arise from inordinate self-love, and therefore vex us; they do no good, neither work any real amendment in us; they cloud the soul, and darken faith, and cool love; and it is only the stronger beams of these that can dispel them. And the stronger that faith and Divine confidence is in us, and the hotter Divine love is, the soul is so much the more excited and enabled to all the parts of holiness, to mortifications of passions and lusts, to more patience in adversity, and to more thankfulness in all estates.

12. Mortify all impatience in all pains and troubles, whether from the hands of God or men, all desire of revenge, all resentment of injuries; and by the pure love of God, love thy very persecutors as if they were thy dearest friends.

13. Finally, mortify thy own will in all things, with full resignation of thyself to suffer all dereliction, outward and inward, all pain, and pressures, and desolations, and that for the pure love of God: for from self-love and self-will spring all sin and all pain.

A PRAYER.

14. "O Jesus, my Savior! thy blessed humility, impress it on my heart. Make me most sensible of thy infinite dignity, and of my own vileness, that I may hate myself as a thing of naught, and be willing to be despised and trodden upon by all as the vilest mire of the streets; that I may still retain these words—I AM NOTHING, I HAVE NOTHING, I CAN DO NOTHING, AND I DESIRE NOTHING BUT ONE."

## SECTION IV.

1. Never do anything with propriety and singular affection, being too earnest, or too much given to it; but with continual meekness of heart and mind, lie at the foot of God, and say, "Lord, I desire nothing, neither in myself, nor in any creature, save only to know and execute thy blessed will." Saying alway in thy heart, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? Transform my will into thine: fill full, and swallow up, as it were, my affections with thy love, and with an insatiable desire to honor thee, and despise myself."

2. If thou aspire to attain to the perfect knitting and union with God, know that it requireth a perfect exspoliation, and denudation, or bare nakedness, and utter forsaking of all sin, yea, of all creatures, and of thyself particularly: even that thy mind and understanding, thy affections and desires, thy memory and fancy, be made bare of all things in the world, and all sensual pleasures in them, so as thou wouldst be content that the bread which thou eatest had no more savor than a stone, and yet, for his honor and glory that created bread, thou art pleased that it savoreth well: but yet, from the delectation thou feelest in it, turn thy heart to his praises and love that made it.

3. The more perfectly thou livest in the abstraction, and departure, and bare nakedness of thy mind from all creatures, the more nakedly and purely shalt thou have the fruition of the Lord thy God, and shalt live the more heavenly and angelical life. Therefore,

4. Labor above all things most exactly to forsake all for him; and chiefly to forsake and contemn thyself; purely loving him, and in a manner forgetting thyself and all things, for the vehement burning love of him; thus thy mind will run so much upon him, that thou wilt take no heed what is sweet or bitter, neither wilt thou consider time or place, nor mark one person from another, for the wonder and love of thy Lord God, and the desire of his blessed will, pleasure, and honor, in all things. And whatsoever good thou dost, know and think that God doth it, and not thou.

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5. Choose always (to the best of thy skill) what is most to God's honor, and most like unto Christ and his example, and most profitable to thy neighbor, and most against thy own proper will, and least serviceable to thy own praise and exaltation.

6. If thou continue faithful in this spiritual work and travail, God at length, without doubt, will hear thy knocking, and will deliver thee from all thy spiritual trouble, from all the tumults, noise, and incumbrance of cogitations and fancies, and from all earthly affections, which thou canst by no better means put away, than by continual and fervent desire of the love of God.

7. Do not at any time let or hinder his working, by following thine own will; for behold how much thou dost the more perfectly forsake thine own will, and the love of thyself, and of all worldly things, so much the more deeply and safely shalt thou be knit unto God, and increase in his true and pure love.

## SECTION V.

1. If thou still above all things seek that union, thou must transfund and pour thy whole will into the high pleasure of God; and whatsoever befalls thee, thou must be without murmuring and retraction of heart, accepting it most joyfully for his love whose will and work it is.

2. Let thy great joy and comfort evermore be, to have his pleasure done in thee, though in pains, sickness, persecutions, oppressions, or inward griefs and pressures of heart, coldness or barrenness of mind, darkening of thy will and senses, or any temptations, spiritual or bodily. And,

3. Under any of these, be always wary thou turn not to sinful delights, nor to sensual and carnal pleasures, nor set thy heart on vain things, seeking comfort thereby, nor in any wise be idle, but, always as thou canst, compel and force thyself to some good spiritual exercise or bodily work; and though they be then unsavory to thee, yet are they not the less, but the more acceptable to God.

4. Take all afflictions as tokens of God's love to thee, and trials of thy love to him, and purposes of kindness to enrich thee, and increase more plentifully in thee his blessed gifts and spiritual graces, if thou persevere faithfully unto the end; not leaving off the vehement desire of his love and thy own perfection.

5. Offer up thyself wholly to him, and fix the point of thy love upon his most blessed increated love; and there let thy soul and heart rest and delight, and be as it were resolved and melted most happily into the blessed Godhead; and then take that as a token, and be assured by it, that God will grant thy lovely and holy desire. Then shalt thou feel in a manner no difference between honor and shame, joy and sorrow; but whatsoever thou perceivest to appertain to the honor of thy Lord, be it ever so hard and unpleasant to thyself, thou wilt heartily embrace it, yea, with all thy might follow and desire it: yet, when thou wilt think thou hast done what is possible for thee, thou wilt think thou hast done nothing at all, yea, thou shalt be ashamed, and detest thyself, that thou hast so wretchedly and imperfectly served so noble and worthy a Lord; and therefore, thou wilt desire and endeavor every hour to do and suffer greater and more perfect things than hitherto thou hast done, *forgetting the things that are behind, and pressing forward to those that are before.*

6. If thou hast in any measure attained to love and abide in God, then mayest thou keep the power of thy soul and thy senses, as it were, shut up in God, from gadding out to any worldly thing or vanity, as much as possible, where they have so joyfully a security and safeness. Satiate thy soul in him, and in all other things still see his blessed presence.

7. Whatsoever befalleth thee, receive it not from the hand of any creature, but from him alone, and render back all to him, seeking in all things his pleasure and honor, the purifying and subduing of thyself. What can harm thee, when all must first touch God, within whom thou hast enclosed thyself?

8. When thou perceivest thyself thus knit to God, and thy soul more fast and joined nearer to him than to thine own body, then shalt thou know his everlasting, and incomprehensible, and ineffable goodness, and the true nobleness of thy soul, that came from him, and was made to be reunited to him.

9. If thou wouldst ascend and come up to thy Lord God, thou must climb up by the wounds of his blessed humanity, that remain as it were, for that use; and when thou art got up there, thou wouldst rather suffer death than willingly commit any sin.

10. Entering into Jesus, thou castest thyself into an infinite sea of Goodness, that more easily drowns and happily swallows thee up, than the ocean does a drop of water. Then shalt thou be hid and transformed in him, and shalt often be as thinking without thought, and knowing without knowledge, and loving without love, comprehended of him whom thou canst not comprehend.

## SECTION VI.

1. Too much desire to please men, mightily prejudiceth the pleasing of God.

2. Too great earnestness and vehemency, and too greedy delight in bodily work and external doings scattereth and loseth the tranquillity and calmness of the mind.

3. Cast all thy care on God, and commit all to his good pleasure: laud, and praise, and applaud him in all things, small and great. Forsake thy own will, and deliver up thyself freely and cheerfully to the will of

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God, without reserve or exception, in prosperity and adversity, sweet or sour, to have or to want, to live or to die.

4. Disunite thy heart from all things, and unite it only to God.

5. Remember often, and devoutly, the life and passion, the death and resurrection, of our Savior Jesus.

6. Descant not on other men's deeds, but consider thine own: forget other men's faults, and remember thine own.

7. Never think highly of thyself, nor despise any other man.

8. Keep silence and retirement as much as thou canst, and through God's grace, they will keep thee from snares and offences.

9. Lift up thy heart often to God, and desire in all things his assistance.

10. Let thy heart be filled and wholly taken up with the love of God, and of thy neighbor; and do all that thou dost, in that sincere charity and love.

The sum is:

1. Remember always the presence of God.
2. Rejoice always in the will of God. And,
3. Direct all to the glory of God.

## SECTION VII.

1. Little love, little trust; but a great love brings a great confidence.

2. That is a blessed hope that doth not slacken us in our duty, nor maketh us secure, but increaseth both a cheerful will, and gives greater strength to mortification and all obedience.

3. What needest thou, or why travailest thou about so many things? Think upon one, desire and love one, and thou shalt find great rest. Therefore,

4. Wherever thou be, let this voice of God be still in thine ear: My son, return inwardly to thy heart, abstract thyself from all things, and mind me only. Thus,

5. With a pure mind in God, clean and bare from the memory of all things, remaining unmoveably in him, thou shalt think and desire nothing but him alone; as though there were nothing else in the world but he and thou only together: that all thy faculties and powers being thus re-collected into God, thou mayest become one spirit with him.

6. Fix thy mind on thy crucified Savior, and remember continually his great meekness, love, and obedience, his pure chastity, his unspeakable patience, and all the holy virtues of his humanity.

7. Think on his mighty power and infinite goodness; how he created and redeemed thee; how he justifieth thee, and worketh in thee all virtues, graces, and goodness: and thus remember him, until thy memory turn into love and affection. Therefore,

8. Draw thy mind thus from all creatures, unto a certain silence and rest from the jangling and company of all things below God; and when thou canst come to this, then is thy heart a place meet and ready for thy Lord God to abide in, there to talk with thy soul.

9. True humility gaineth and overcometh God Almighty, and maketh thee also apt and meet to receive all graces and gifts. But alas! who can say that he hath this blessed meekness, it being so hard, so uncertain, so secret and unknown a thing, to forsake and mortify perfectly and exactly thyself, and that most venomous worm of all goodness, vainglory?

10. Commit all to the high providence of God, and suffer nothing to rest or enter into thy heart save only God. All things in the earth are too base to take up thy love or care, or to trouble thy noble heart, thy immortal and heavenly mind. Let them care and sorrow, or rejoice about these things, who are of the world, for whom Christ would not pray.

11. Thou canst not please nor serve two masters at once: thou canst not love divers and contrary things; if, then, thou wouldst know what thou lovest, mark well what thou thinkest most upon. Leave earth, and have heaven; leave the world and have God.

12. All sin and vice spring from the property of our own will; all virtue and perfection come and grow from the mortifying of it, and the resigning of it wholly to the pleasure and will of God.



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# APPENDIX.

## LIFE OF ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON:*

### BY JAMES AIKMAN.

IN an age when the study of Theology was the universal and leading pursuit, and amounted almost to a passion, ROBERT LEIGHTON was a pre-eminent theologian; not so much from his acquirements in that species of literature, in which, however, he was deeply skilled, as from the delightful example he exhibited, in his life and writings, of a religion he cordially believed, and, as far as his apprehensions extended, faithfully copied. He was not free in his conduct from the errors of humanity, but he was one of the very few who err on the lovelier side; his amiability of temper, and purity of principle, led him to carry, among men of sterner stuff, the proposals of Charity which he professed, farther than either accorded with the situation he held, the rights that were in peril, or the temper of the times. It therefore happened to him, as must happen to all placed in similar circumstances, that his character was viewed by his contemporaries, in extremes; and as posterity do not easily get rid of the feelings of their ancestors, it has, even in our days, been looked at in very different lights.

Men have no right to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, yet it is no indefensible propensity to esteem the seed of the righteous, to feel grief for them when they leave the paths of their progenitors, and if they have descended from persecuted parents, and join their persecutors, to address them as the prophet did Jehoshaphat, "Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore there is wrath upon thee from before the Lord: nevertheless, there are good things found about thee."

That such sentiments should have been entertained, respecting the subject of this memoir, by many excellent men in Scotland, will not appear strange when the cruel infliction his father, Dr. Alexander Leighton, underwent, is considered; and however his own mind might have felt justified in the change, it was not to be expected that presbyterians, who were themselves suffering for the same cause, which they were fully persuaded was for righteousness' sake, could be easily convinced of the strength of those reasons, that influenced the son of such a father, to leave their ranks, and join their opponents.

Dr. Alexander Leighton was descended, it is said, of an ancient family in Forfarshire, whose chief seat was Ulys-haven, or Usen, but the fact is as obscure as it is unimportant; it is certain that he was one of the numerous host of confessors who bore testimony against the enormous abuse of prelatic power in his day, and suffered severely for it.

As was not uncommon in these times of persecution, although a minister of the gospel, he had also studied medicine, and afterward practised it in London during the reign of James I. and early in that of Charles I., where he also exercised his ministry, but whether to any stated congregation does not appear. Warmly attached to presbyterian principles, he took part in the violent and dangerous controversies then agitating England, and published a work entitled: "An Appeal to the Parliament, or Zion's Plea against the Prelacie: the summe whereof is delivered in a Decade of Positions. In the handling whereof the Lord Bishops and their appurtenances are manifestly proved, both by divine and humane lawes, to be intruders upon the priviledges of Christ, of the King, and of the Commonweal: and therefore upon good evidence given, she hartelie desireth a judgment and execution—printed in the year and moneth wherein Rochelle was lost, 1628." The style of the book is in perfect accordance with what unhappily is the general style of polemics, and such as we have seen exemplified, even in our own day, when men allow their passions to intermingle with their controversies: yet it was not more virulent, if it was as much so, as many of those which appeared on the opposite side.

For this work he was brought to trial, and the arguments of the book, which plainly proved that an overgrown, ambitious, and tyrannical prelacy, was not the ministry ap-

* An edition of Leighton's Works has been recently published in Edinburgh, to which is prefixed a "*Life of the Author*," by James Aikman. As this Life contains some memorials and letters not incorporated in Pearson's Life prefixed to this volume, the publisher has thought it advisable to insert them in the form of an Appendix.

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pointed by Christ in his church, were, it seems, aggravated by the imprint, as marking his dissatisfaction to government—it being the general belief, that if England had interfered in behalf of the French protestants, Rochelle would have been saved from the hands of the Papists; and by the book being also decorated, according to the fashion of the day, with two hieroglyphical cuts explanatory of the subject, the first a burning lamp, supported by a book and two armed men guarding it; the legend, not remarkably elegant, explained the meaning:

> Prevailing prelates strive to quench our light,
> Except your sacred power quash their might.

The other represented an elder bush growing out of a ruinous tower, from whose branches a parcel of bishops were tumbling, one of them with a strong box in his hand—the legend,

> The tottering prelates with their trumpery all,
> Shall moulder down like elder from a wall.

These, which were grating subjects in the days of Charles to the members of the English Hierarchy, and not over-pleasant in the days of George IV.,* will scarcely be deemed any palliation of the conduct of the Star Chamber, in their treatment of the author, even although it was under the influence of the bishops.

He was arrested early in 1629, hurried to a wretched cell in Newgate, low, damp, and without light, except what was admitted, along with the rain, from an aperture in the roof, overrun with rats and other vermin. Here he lay from Tuesday night till Thursday at noon, without food, and for fourteen days endured solitary confinement in this miserable hole; while his house, in his absence, was rifled, his books destroyed, and his papers carried off. After sixteen weeks' captivity, he was served with an information of the crimes with which he was charged, but he was sick and unable to attend, and from the nature of his disorder, a fitter object of compassion than punishment, for the skin and hair had almost wholly come off his body.

Yet though thus afflicted, this aged, infirm divine, was condemned to a punishment the stoutest ruffian could hardly have endured, which some of the lords of court conceived could never be inflicted on a dying man, and was only held out as a terror to others: it was—to be degraded as a minister, to have his ears cut off, his nose slit, to be branded in the face, to stand in the pillory, to be whipped at a post, to pay a fine of £1000, and to suffer imprisonment till it was paid; the which when Archbishop Laud heard pronounced, he pulled off his hat, and holding up his hands, gave thanks to God, who had given the church victory over her enemies! And it was mercilessly inflicted. On the twenty-ninth of November, in a cold, frosty day, he was stripped, and received thirty-six lashes with a triple cord, after which he stood during a snow-storm two hours half-naked on the pillory at Westminster, was branded on one cheek with a red-hot iron, had one ear cut off, and one side of his nose slit. On that day se'ennight, ere his sores were healed, he was taken to the pillory at Cheapside, and underwent the remainder of his sentence. He was then carried back to prison, and shut in for upward of ten years until the meeting of the Long Parliament: when released from his miserable confinement, he could hardly walk, see, or hear. The Parliament reversed all the proceedings against him, and voted him £6000 for his great sufferings and damages, and in 1642 gave him an appointment. He died about 1649.

Dr. Leighton had two sons, the eldest Robert, the second Elisha; and two daughters, the eldest Sapphira, the other Mrs. Rathband, of whom nothing more is known. Robert was born in the year 1611, in London, and Burnet tells us, "he was sent to his father to be bred in Scotland." The year when he was sent thither, or how his education was conducted till he became a student in the university of Edinburgh, in 1627, forms a blank in his life, which can not now be filled up. He attended the different classes till 1631, when he took the degree of Master of Arts; and it deserves to be noticed, that the professors during that period were chiefly men who were attached to the mongrel, semi-episcopal, semi-presbyterian latitudinarianism, which was the court religion of the time in Scotland. He had early imbibed a decided aversion for the whole frame of the church of England—and no wonder! but the mixed system of episcopacy then taught in the Scottish school, which allowed of a synod of presbyters with a permanent presiding bishop, similar to what Mosheim thinks was early introduced into the Christian church, appears to have been the pivot on which his young mind rested the balance between the opposing systems, for it does not appear he had then decided. The circumstances of his family not permitting him to apply to the ecclesiastical courts for license, he went abroad.

Burnet, to whose brief notices we are chiefly indebted for any account of young Leighton, says, "From Scotland his father sent him to travel." How his father, who was previously immured in his miserable habitation, found the means to do so, we are left to conjecture. He travelled several years in France, and resided some time at Douay, where he had relatives; he is here reported or supposed to have fallen in with some religionists, "whose lives were framed on the strictest model of primitive piety;" but as in his writings he has repeatedly declared his opinion to be, that the church of Rome is utterly anti-Christian, it is not at all probable,

* Pearson's Life of Archbishop Leighton, prefixed to this edition of his works. The following references are to that Memoir.

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that the practice of the monks there had much, if any, influence in abating his veneration for the "presbyterian platform;" at least, he embraced the first opportunity of returning to Scotland, and accepting a presbyterian charge.

During his absence on the continent, a series of events had taken place in Scotland, that had entirely overturned the pseudo-prelacy, which he had left in power, and covenanted presbyterianism, in the strictest sense that it ever was professed, was established instead, by the laws of the land, and in the affections of the people. Leighton was a man of peace, and when the struggle was at its height, he did not choose to mingle in the fray, but when the religious community were rejoicing in the acquisition of their freedom, and their favorite form of church-government, he came home to swell the triumph, and enjoy the gale. Accordingly, on his return to Scotland, having been unanimously called by the congregation of Newbottle, a parish in the presbytery of Dalkeith, after passing through the usual course of trial for the ministry to the great satisfaction of his judges, he was ordained there on the sixteenth of December, 1641, being then in the thirtieth year of his age. The parish is delightfully situated on the banks of the Esk, among whose romantic scenery Leighton could enjoy the retirement he so much loved; and the residence of the Earl of Lothian in the abbey within his bounds, a nobleman attached to the cause of religion, in whose family he might cultivate the advantages of elevated society, would add considerably to its charms. To the manner in which he fulfilled the duties of a parochial minister, perhaps the obscurity in which this is involved may be considered the highest testimony. A person who afterward arrived at such distinguished eminence in such turbulent times, must have acted with more than ordinary diligence and circumspection, to have escaped blame, from such critical scrutinizers as he was exposed to. These duties were what men of modern times would shrink from, for they were the entire business of a minister's life, what the word of God and the rules of his church enjoined what his people expected, and what his co-presbyters practised themselves, and enforced on their brethren. Besides the services of the Sabbath, there were usually one or more lectures or sermons preached during the week; the parishioners were regularly visited from house to house, the whole as punctually examined, particularly the young, the instruction of whom it was an important part of the ministerial function to superintend; both by inspecting the schools, and inquiring into their progress in religious and useful learning, and by their visitations at their homes to watch over their moral training—a species of education, the last especially, the fruits of which were abundantly manifest in the next generation, which was destined to bear the fiery trial of a twenty-eight years' furnace. Leighton, whose delight was in his work, it may be easily imagined, would not abridge any of these necessary duties; and all his biographers concur in stating, that he was most assiduous in discharging the various branches of his sacred office. "He diligently visited the poor of the flock, was ever to be found in the chambers of the afflicted, and at the beds of the sick or the dying. He promoted personal, domestic, social, and public religion, to the utmost of his power, by precept, example, and prayer." One solitary anecdote remains of this interval.

It was the practice of the presbytery, to inquire of their members twice a year, whether they preached to the times? that is, whether they improved the serious and alarming circumstances by which they were surrounded, and at a period, when the pulpit was almost the only medium through which the people could be informed of the state of public affairs—directed in the duty which they were required to pursue—whether the ministers acted as faithful watchmen?—Leighton acknowledged the omission, but adroitly apologized for it, by saying, "If all the brethren have preached to the times, may not one poor brother be allowed to preach for eternity?" a question which, had his co-presbyters been the zealots of a party, would have been received by anything but approbation. And it is exceedingly doubtful, in times of dread import, like those in which he lived, when the wheels of Providence seem moving onward with accelerated motion, laden with events to which the mysterious voice of prophecy calls our attention—it seems more than doubtful whether the ministers of God are not liable to the rebuke, "Ye can discern the face of the heavens, but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" when they keep silence, and do not "preach to the times."

Two very different testimonies respecting the nature of Leighton's pulpit oratory have come down to us. "His preaching," says Burnet, "had a sublimity both of thought and expression in it. The grace and gravity was such, that few heard him without a sensible emotion. I am sure I never did. His style was rather too fine, but there was a majesty and beauty in it, that left so deep an impression, that I can not yet forget the sermon I heard him preach thirty years ago. And yet with this he seemed to look on himself as so ordinary a preacher that while he had a cure, he was ready to employ all others; and when he was a bishop, he chose to preach to small auditories, and would never give notice beforehand; he had indeed a very low voice, and so could not be heard by a great crowd." Baillie, in speaking of Andrew Gray, one of the most extraordinary young ministers that has appeared in the church of Scotland, whose memory is yet

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fresh in the west, and whose sermons, published under every possible disadvantage, evince that it deserves to be so, thus obliquely gives the opinion he and his moderate brethren held of Leighton's ministerial instructions. "He has the new guise of preaching, which Mr. Hugh Binning and Mr. Robert Leighton began, containing the ordinary way of expounding and dividing a text, of raising doctrines and uses; but runs out a discourse on some common head, in a high romancing and inscriptural style, tickling the ear for the present, and moving the affections in some, but leaving little or naught to the memory and understanding."

That Gray and Binning were amazingly popular, is well attested; that Leighton deserved to be equally or more so, will appear evident from a comparison of the remains they have left behind them; for all have written specimens of their sermons, and respecting the merit of our author's, we shall afterward speak. But those only who heard the living preachers, could tell us of their eloquence. They who know — and what clown does not know?—the power of the keen language of the eye, the emphasis of countenance, the varied tone and energy of voice, even the influence of grave appropriate action, can note the difference between the living and the dead. In the church of Scotland when in her glory, reading was unknown, and would not have been tolerated. The ministers were too much alive to the importance of their subjects to waste much time upon the "conning of nice phrases," and depended more upon the vigor than the polish of their language; yet were they not inelegant or careless, as the posthumous works of all these eminent three bear ample evidence: but their usual method appears to have been, first they studied their subject fully, then wrote a few notes, in modern terms made a skeleton of their discourse, and left the filling up to the fulness of their heart at the time of the delivery. This appears to have been the case especially with Andrew Gray, but in some instances the sermons appear to have been fully written out, although not slavishly delivered, as in the case of Hugh Binning. And it is a curious fact, that the whole of Durham's elaborate commentary on the Revelations, forming a folio volume, containing many calculations, and several profound disquisitions, was delivered without having been committed to paper, but taken down as he delivered it, was copied out afterward, and brought to himself for correction, except a very few of the last sheets. Indeed, it appears strange, that the reading of sermons should ever have found practitioners or advocates, except among the indolent or imbecile; and I apprehend with scarcely an exception it will be found, that either want of capacity or want of diligence is at the root of the practice, and in either case, such a person ought not to be a public speaker. Where God has withheld the talents for public speaking from a man, it needs no revelation to tell us that that man was never intended for a public speaker. If God have bestowed the talents, and he refuse to cultivate them, it is as clear that that man is unworthy of exercising the office of a gospel minister. If, after a man has been duly called to his office, and if, after having exercised it faithfully, it has pleased the inscrutable wisdom of Heaven to deprive him of any of his faculties, it becomes then a question whether he ought to retire. And if this be impossible or improper, say that merely memory has failed, and there be no funds for his support, and his people be unwilling to dispense with his services; the case is altered—let him read. But I believe it will in general be found in the cases of conversion, that often comparatively weak discourses have been blessed, while the most elaborately composed discourses, and the most beautifully read, have been merely listened to as elegant essays, or praised as the lovely works of art. And it is natural that it should be so; God is the God of means, as well as of grace, and he has appointed the living voice, the "foolishness of *preaching*," whereby to save them that believe; and HIS approbation, not the applause of elegant or crowded auditories, ought to be the grand end and aim of a minister. Leighton was an enemy to reading. "I know," he said, "that weakness of memory is pleaded in excuse for this custom, but better minds would make better memories. Such an excuse is unworthy of a man, and much more of a father, who may want vent indeed in addressing his children, but ought never to want matter. Like Elihu, he should be refreshed by speaking."

If the remark hold true of private, as of public affairs, that the years which afford fewest materials for the historian are generally those that have been the happiest, the years which Leighton spent at Newbottle must have been among the most pleasant of his life; but toward their close, the political state of the country invaded even his peaceful retirement. It is well known that the troubles of Scotland, from the Reformation till the final expulsion of the Stuarts, arose from contests for religious and civil liberty on the part of the people, and for priestly power and absolute despotism on the part of the crown. By treachery and deceit, the British Solomon, styled king-craft, James the I. had during a long reign attempted, and nearly accomplished, the overthrow of the constitution of his native land—the task of completing the destruction of his people's rights, he left as a legacy to his son; this Charles rashly endeavored to accomplish, while his hands were fully occupied with his English subjects, and, by introducing the liturgy among a people who detested it, he put the match to a train that lay ready for explosion—the consequence was, that after an idle

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parade of royal weakness, when opposed to the universal wish of a people, he was forced to give a free and fair constitution, securing the rights of his subjects from princely or prelatic invasion. Of this constitution the covenant was the cause, and on every infringement, it was renewed as the guaranty. In it the king and people swore to the performance of their various duties, and among others, to preserve the religion as then established, and to resist all innovations tending to reintroduce the prelacy.

A multiplication of oaths to men in public life, besides being one of the slenderest of all ties to unprincipled men, is one of the worst in Christian nations, as it uniformly involves them in varied and multiplied iniquity; it distresses, binds, and debilitates, the minds of the conscientious, while it is frail as Sampson's green withs to the sturdy politician. But if ever there was a time, when a solemn declaration of principles, and an explicit promise or vow to observe them, were called for, it was just about the period when Leighton entered upon the pastoral office at Newbottle; and I think it plain from his own writings, that he conscientiously viewed the covenant in this light, and subscribed it at his ordination without scruple. Had Charles I. been sincere when he ratified the acts of the Scottish parliament, he might have reigned a powerful monarch, and died a better man; but his duplicity led to the great civil war, and forced Scotland and England to join together for mutual preservation from threatened tyranny. They did so, in an agreement known by the name of the Solemn League and Covenant, in which they pledged themselves to endeavor uniformity in religion according to the word of God, and the extirpation of prelacy; and this, in the form of an oath, was forced upon almost every inhabitant of Scotland. But it deserves especial notice, that the zealots who were most forward in pressing this oath, were the political presbyterians, men whose exuberance of fire, like that of all violent partisans, was exactly in proportion to their lack of principle; and they who were then the chief instruments of covenanting oppression, were the very persons who turned apostates, and were the chief instruments of prelatical persecution.

Leighton, whose aversion to the lordly pomp of the English hierarchy was undoubtedly as sincere as it was well founded, unhesitatingly subscribed this bond himself, and afterward administered it to the students in Edinburgh university. He thus explains the reason of his facility: "For it would be noted, that when the covenant was framed, there was no episcopacy at all in being in Scotland, but in England only, so that the extirpation of that frame only could then be merely intended." It may be difficult, however, to exculpate him from the error of having first vowed and then made inquiry; nor, when he attempts it himself, is he very successful—but great allowance must be made for the gentleness of his natural disposition, and his most amiable desire for peace, especially when his whole life evinced that he was neither actuated by motives of covetousness or ambition; and whether we agree with him or not, we must agree, that as his life was holy, there can be little doubt but his motives were pure. Let us however hear himself, though in this case he appears to have lost something of his sweetness of temper.

"The truth is, that besides many other evils, the iniquity and unhappiness of such oaths and covenants lie much in this, that, being commonly framed by persons, that even amongst themselves are not fully of one mind, but have their different opinions and interests to serve—and it was so even in this—they commonly patched up so many articles and clauses, and these too of so versatile and ambiguous terms, that they prove most wretched snares, and thickets of briers and thorns to the consciences of those who are engaged in them, and matter of endless contentions and disputes among them, about the true sense and intendment, and the ties and obligations of those doubtful clauses, especially in such alterations and revolutions of affairs, as always may, and often do, even within few years, follow after them, for the models and productions of such devices are not usually long-lived. And whatsoever may be said for their excuse, in whole or in part, who, in yielding to the power that pressed it, and the general opinion of this church at that time, did take that covenant in the most moderate and least schismatical sense that the terms can admit; yet I know not what can be said to clear them of a very great sin, that not only framed such an engine, but violently imposed it upon all ranks of men, not ministers and public persons only, but the whole body and community of the people, thereby engaging such droves of poor ignorant persons, to they know not what: and, to speak freely, to such a hodge-podge of things of various concernments, religious and civil, as church discipline and government, the privileges of parliaments, and liberties of subjects, and condign punishment of malignants, things hard enough for the wisest and learnedest to draw the just lines of, and to give plain definitions and decisions of them, and therefore certainly as far off from the reach of poor country people's understanding, as from the true interest of their souls, and yet to tie them by a religious oath, either to know all, or to contend for them blindfold, without knowing of them."

These sentiments are contained in his "Modest Defence of Moderate Episcopacy," written after he was a bishop, and considering the cause he had to defend, might pass without much observation, although, if carried their proper length, they would exclude the people from any voice in the choice or conduct of their rulers, civil and ecclesiasti-

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cal, and lead to the quietude of a settled despotism in the church and state. But it is a painful example of how far partiality for a side, or the supposed necessity of advocating a bad cause, may carry a good man, when we hear him in the next sentence asking, "Where will be instanced a greater oppression and tyranny over consciences than this?" and replying, "Certainly they that now govern in this church, can not be charged with anything near or like unto it, for whatsoever they require of intrants to the ministry, they require neither subscriptions nor oaths of ministers already entered, and far less of the whole body of the people." Yet at this very time, had the whole ministry been required to acknowledge the royal supremacy in matters ecclesiastical, and own a power in the church, which they understood to be subversive of that of her head and king: still there is no divine more clear upon the character of Christ, as the sole lawgiver and ruler of his people, than our author.

While Leighton's mind was hurt by the manner in which the Solemn League and Covenant was pressed, he naturally associated with those whose sentiments on this subject accorded with his own. Among them was the father of Gilbert Burnet, of the episcopalian persuasion, and particularly attached to the Hamilton family, with whose fortunes Leighton had almost associated his own. After the providence of God had declared against Charles, and he was a captive in the hands of his opponents, still he might have returned to his throne with honor, could he have submitted to be honest, but he wished to reascend it uncontrolled, and played a double game that led him to the scaffold. Unfortunately, the Duke of Hamilton was induced to second his efforts, by breaking the Solemn League and Covenant with England, and entering into an *engagement* with the captive monarch. This engagement—which, if successful, would have laid the kingdoms prostrate at the feet of an incensed sovereign, who would give them no security for all they had been fighting for, except "the word of a prince," and that had been forfeited at least a score of times—divided Scotland; part resolving to maintain the covenant, and part entering into the engagement. Among those who favored the latter, were all who had any leaning toward episcopacy, and Leighton, who had hitherto kept aloof from the politics of the day, was most unfortunately induced by his new associates, to declare in favor of an engagement, the terms of which were not fully known at the time, and which we would in charity hope were misrepresented to him, as they were to others: like every effort in favor of the unhappy Charles, the project failed, and involved himself and his adherents in deeper ruin.

The high character of Leighton, and the friendship of the Earl of Lothian, saved him from any very serious consequences of his conduct, while the dominant party showed their liberality, by sparing so conspicuous an opponent from any other punishment than appointing him to rebuke those of his parishioners who had accompanied the duke in his disastrous expedition. There is more of policy than of godly simplicity in the manner in which he extricated himself from a dilemma that could not fail of being extremely irksome to an ingenuous mind; and when parties run so high, and the times were so perilous, it says a great deal for the forbearance of the presbytery, that such an evasion of their injunctions was overlooked. When the parties ordered to make public profession of their repentance came before him, he told them they had been in an expedition in which he believed they had neglected their duty to God; and had been guilty of injustice and violence, of drunkenness and other immoralities, and he charged them to repent of these very seriously, without meddling with the quarrel or the ground of that war. This lesson seems to have cured Leighton of meddling with politics, as we hear no more upon this head till after the restoration; but from the slight notices in Baillie's Letters, it would appear that he associated with the high-flyers in the church, who were evangelical in their preaching, and suspected of favoring the sectaries, a predilection which naturally arose from the inferior weight he gave to differences upon matters of church-government when put in competition with personal piety; and perhaps his laxness on that point, might be not a little increased by observing the pertinacity with which many contended for the form, who cared very little about the power of godliness, who were more anxious about the cut of their vestments than the conduct of their lives. The numerous sects and varieties of opinion which sprung up at this time, grievously unhinged men's minds on these subjects, and the bitterness with which the sections of the same party often treated each other, made the quiet of the land wish for the wings of the dove, that they might fly thence and be at rest.

From whatsoever cause, in the year 1652, after the arrival of the second Charles among the Scots had raised their dissensions to a height, and brought their affairs to a crisis, and when his defeat had strengthened the distractions in the church, and spread a wider desolation in the country, Leighton tendered his resignation to the presbytery; this they declined accepting, and he was persuaded to remain; but when there appeared little prospect of settlement among the divided presbyterians, and increasing bitterness of spirit between those who wished and prayed for the restoration of their king, and those who deprecated such an event from the specimen they had already received of his conduct and disposition, he again renewed his request, and on the 3d of February, 1653, was re-

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Newbottle, after having labored eleven years diligently among them.

Nothing tries a man's principles better than touching his purse, and were we to judge from the conduct of many who bear the name of Christian, we should be apt to imagine that the injunction, "Love not the world, nor the things of the world," ought to be inverted; but wisdom is justified of her children, and sometimes there do appear men, whose actions corresponding to their profession, evince, that setting the affections on things that are above, and not on things below, is, though a rare, yet a real attainment. Leighton was one; and a circumstance occurred about this time, which places his estimate of the uncertain riches of time, in a striking point of view, and which, although it possesses an appearance of carelessness, and might possibly mark him out as a fit prey for pecuniary plunderers, was not by himself looked back upon during his life with much pain; and that he got so far above the world before he got out of it, will not be now to his holy spirit any cause of regret.

His father, who had acquired some property after his sufferings, having died, left him about one thousand pounds: this, which was all his patrimony, his brother-in-law, Mr. Lightmaker, had advised him to come to London and get placed in proper security. Before a month had elapsed, he had occasion to acknowledge the propriety of his brother's advice, for the merchant in whose hands the money was placed became bankrupt, and he lost all; but as his heart was not with the treasure that had perished, he was not affected beyond what a Christian ought.

When the Scottish religious parties could not agree among themselves, and each were anxious to obtain an ascendency, the English parliament, now paramount, appointed sequestrators, with an ample commission to superintend the setting aside, or planting churches or universities. These uniformly supported what would now be styled the evangelical party, then called the remonstrants, to which Leighton had always adhered, although he had differed on the political question of the engagement; and from among these the sequestrators filled up all the vacancies that occurred—for they were men of superior talents, and generally reported of superior sanctity. And it is here deserving of especial notice, that the parliament first, and Cromwell afterward, filled the public situations in the church and universities of Scotland, solely with men of acknowledged abilities and good conduct, and in the civil courts with judges of strict integrity and worth.

In the search after persons capable of filling eminent stations, Leighton was not overlooked: he was called to the highly responsible office of principal in the university of Edinburgh. William Coville, minister of



viously elected, but as he was a known enemy to the existing government, he was set aside, and the magistrates of the capital, who have always shown a due submission to the powers that be, joined in presenting Mr. Robert Leighton, "who was prevailed with to accept of it, because in it he was wholly separated from all church matters." The ministers were joint patrons, but refused to vote, "because, though they were content with Mr. Robert Leighton, they were not clear in the manner of the call." This event took place early in 1653, and in the month of July following, the general assembly was conducted by Lieut. Col. Cotterell, under a guard of foot-musqueteers and dragoons, a mile beyond Edinburgh, where they were dismissed and commanded never more to assemble; government conceiving that they assumed a civil power inconsistent with the peace of the realm. Synods and inferior judicatories were allowed to meet, but from this time all coercive power was removed from the church, and she was left to wield her own proper arms. Whether the English parliament interfered to enforce the covenant or not, is uncertain, though shortly after it was positively forbidden. Leighton, however, both took it himself, and enforced it upon others during this period, so that he can not be considered as having withdrawn from presbyterian communion till afterward, as indeed there was no other form of religion professed publicly, till the independents gave a free toleration to all, when several sects sprung up, to none of which could he, as principal of the university, have joined himself.

His labors in this office were abundant. He delivered a theological lecture in Latin once a week to the students, and at stated intervals preached to them in the college church. These prelections attracted crowds, who were charmed with the elegance of his style, and the animation of his delivery. He did not, however, confine his attention to his public duties; in his private conversation with the young men, he labored to form their minds to the practice of virtue, and his instructions were happily enforced by his own example; indeed, in public or private, religion was the vital principle of his soul, the element in which he breathed.

For eight years Scotland enjoyed under the commonwealth a degree of prosperity and quiet, such as that country had scarcely ever known; and Kirkton and other contemporary writers bear testimony to its being a time in which religion flourished more than almost at any period upon record; and so widely diffused had been the benefits of common education in the lowlands, particularly the west and the south, that there was hardly a family which could not read, and which had not a bible. For these benefits Scotland was partly indebted to the establishment of parish schools by the act of 1633, but chiefly to the

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assiduity of the parochial clergy, who had always shown the deepest interest in the education of the peasantry. The unwearied pains they took, and the good effects which followed, may be judged of from the caricature which Bishop Burnet draws of a faithful ministry and a godly people, and making the necessary deductions for his episcopalian prejudices, it in the most material points confirms the perhaps too flattering picture of Kirkton: "The former incumbents," are his words, "were a grave, solemn sort of people; their spirits were eager, and their tempers sour; but they had an appearance that created respect. They were related to the chief families in the country, either by blood or marriage, and had lived in so decent a manner that the gentry paid great respect to them. They used to visit their parishes much and were so full of the Scriptures, and so ready at extempore prayer, that from that time, they grew to practise extempore sermons; for the custom in Scotland then was, after dinner or supper, to read a chapter in the Scripture, and where they happened to come, if it was acceptable, they on the sudden expounded the chapter. They had brought the people to such a degree of knowledge, that cottagers and servants would have prayed extempore. I have often overheard them at it; and though there was a large mixture of odd stuff, yet I have been astonished to hear how copious and ready they were in it. Their ministers generally brought them about them on the Sunday nights, when the sermons were talked over; and every one, woman as well as man, was desired to speak their sense and their experience, and by these means they had a comprehension of matters of religion, greater than I have seen among people of that sort anywhere." "And as they [the ministers] lived in great familiarity with their people, and used to pray and to talk oft with them in private, so it can hardly be imagined to what a degree they were loved and reverenced by them. They kept scandalous persons under a severe discipline; for breach of sabbath, for an oath, or the least disorder in drunkenness, persons were cited before the church-sessions, that consisted of ten or twelve of the chief of the parish, who with the minister had this care upon them, and were solemnly reproved for it." "These things had a grave appearance, their faults and defects were not so conspicuous." Leighton, who well knew that the preservation of such a system depended, humanely speaking, upon the education of the ministers themselves, and the providing suitable teachers, set himself to promote both these objects, and he obtained an annuity of £200 from the protector to aid his beneficent plans, but the death of that great man caused a universal stagnation of every praiseworthy project, and the restoration threw the country half a century back in the progress of improvement.

During the vacations he frequently made excursions to London and to the Continent. In his visits to the capital he was an occasional attendant at Cromwell's court, of whose clergymen Burnet makes him give a very contemptuous character: "They were men of unquiet and meddling tempers: and their discourses and sermons were dry and unsavory, full of airy cant, or of bombast swellings." Had the bishop been kind enough to have given the names of these worthies that he employs the venerated shade of Leighton to stigmatize, it might have been possible to judge of the justice of the charge, at least to discriminate, for never did England produce a body of abler divines, freer from "bombast or swellings"—unless the overflowing of hearts earnest in the cause of God were such—than what assembled in the court and enjoyed the countenance of the protector; but as a general charge can only be met by a general answer, I would refer those who wish to see a fuller account of some of these traduced ministers, to Orme's Life of Owen, a work which contains a great deal of not common information respecting the ecclesiastical literature of "the sectaries," among whom were men in whose society Leighton would have met neither disgust nor degradation.

According to the same authority, however, the principal found himself more at home among the Romanists at Douay, and derived much advantage during his frequent visits to that college, from the pious lives of some of these religionists; but Leighton himself has declared his own opinion of the Roman catholic system, and of its opposition to Christianity in its fundamental articles, distinctly and repeatedly. Now, if a system be wrong in the foundation, what does it signify how fair the structure! if a man build on sand, the more precious the materials of his house, the more terrible the ruin; and if the Roman catholics have, as Leighton affirms, *vide* remarks on 1 Peter, chap. ii. 6, despised that stone which God hath made the head of the corner, would any of the Lord's people wish to take a pattern from their mode of moulding for polishing other living stones of their temple! The Romish system is designated in Scripture, Mystery, Babylon, the mother of abominations; and instead of learning from her children, the command is, "Come out from among them, be ye separated from them; come out of her, that ye be not partakers of her plagues."

With regard to monkish seclusion, to which some of his friends allege he was partial, he thus speaks: "This is, among many others, a misconceit in the Romish church, that they seem to make holiness a kind of impropriate good, that the common sort can have little share in almost all piety, being shut up within cloister walls as its only fit dwelling. Yet it hath not liked their lodging it seems, but is flown over the walls away from them, for there is little of it even there to be found; but, how-

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ever, their opinion places it there as having little to do abroad in the world, whereas the truth is, that all Christians have this for their common task, though some are under more peculiar obligations [alluding to ministers] to study this one copy."—Remarks on 1 Peter iii. 13.

I should not have said so much on a subject in which our author is so explicit, had it not been that some of his former biographers seemed anxious to exalt the papists at the expense of the presbyterians and independents, by representing the amiable prelate as deriving so much advantage from his intercourse with them, while he was forced almost to flee the world, to get rid of the contention and bombast of the others.

At this time in Scotland, as at all times when a form and profession of religion is fashionable, a number of formalists and hypocrites mingled in the crowd, and as hollow vessels sound loudest, they were generally the most noisy. To such as these Leighton seems to allude in an epistle, supposed to have been written about the same time.*

During the troublous period of the civil war, the parties, and sects, and sections of sects, were probably not so numerous as in the present day, but they were more violent, inasmuch as religion then was more the occupation of a man than it is now, and the public attention was more undividedly directed toward that subject, as general knowledge was neither widely spread, nor much cultivated by the community at large. Good men, however of all parties, deplored the spirit of strife and debate which in too many instances was allowed to corrode the vitals of Christianity, and destroy that spirit of love without which the purest orthodoxy is of little consequence in promoting the cause of Christ. Among these Leighton was conspicuous, and incessant in inculcating the doctrine of peace and charity, and this he did by directing the minds of his hearers to the more important matters of the law, and not by indifference to any fundamental truth. The manner in which he fulfilled his duty toward his pupils while principal of Edinburgh university, he explains in a beautiful valedictory oration which he delivered to the students before he retired.†

With that admirable address, Leighton appears to have closed his university labors; a new scene now began to open upon him, one for which he suffered much in his reputation and usefulness among his contemporaries, and which his admirers, even now, find it hard to do more than excuse—his abandoning the presbyterians, and accepting a bishopric from Charles II. Had Leighton merely exchanged the presbyterial form for the episcopalian, his conduct would have admitted of an easy justification; his earliest sentiments appear to have been in favor of a modified episcopacy, unconnected with temporal power, or lordly state; and the power of a presbytery, when tyrannically exerted, he considered as more oppressive than that of a prelate—in which opinion he entirely coincided with Owen; besides, he considered church-government as a matter of comparatively little moment, when put in competition with personal holiness, and his meek soul was daily harassed by angry controversialists who surrounded him, of many of whom he thought justly, that, while they contended fiercely for the form, they felt little of the power of religion. Changing, therefore, merely from the one profession to the other, under such circumstances, and holding such opinions upon these matters, would have been comparatively, if at all, a venial error. But to join hands with such a set of men as those with whom he associated, and lend the sanction of his name to as foul a usurpation of the supreme kingship of Christ in his church, and as unblushing an invasion of the rights of Christian people, as ever was attempted, since the day when temporal potentates first assumed an unholy influence within her pale, was a proceeding which it is extremely difficult to account for.

Presbyterian church-government, and civil liberty, had been solemnly sanctioned by Charles II. at his coronation at Scoone, and ratified by the most sacred oaths, and most awful engagements known among men; an immense majority of the nation were strongly attached to it; and he had promised, in a written communication to the ministers at Edinburgh, after his restoration, to preserve it. But the profligate advisers by whom he was surrounded, had determined to establish a civil despotism, to which, from early education, and his residence abroad, he was mightily inclined; and the constitution of the Scottish church being esteemed a barrier, it was resolved that it should be swept away; besides, the king, and several of the leading men, had found the strictness of presbyterian discipline, and the decent morality which it required, totally inconsistent with the licentiousness they loved, and the conduct they intended to pursue.

Sharpe, who should have defended, allured by the primacy, betrayed his church, and a crowd of sycophants, who hastened to London to secure their private interests, were easily persuaded to join in the false representation that a majority in Scotland detested the covenant, and desired its overthrow. Episcopacy, therefore, was resolved upon, and the hated fabric of prelacy, which had been so triumphantly levelled, was once more to be reared. Sydserf, the old bishop of Galloway, was the only fragment of the former hierarchy that remained. He had been deposed by the assembly 1638, for erroneous doctrine, but was now nominated to the bishopric of Orkney, a much better living. The others were named chiefly by Sharpe, and promoted on account of their subserviency to the cause, rather than from any fitness for the office

* Life, page 38. † Works, pages 721, 722.

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Wiseheart, formerly chaplain to Montrose, and accused of a military freedom of manners, had Edinburgh, and Fairfoul, a person of no good fame, got Glasgow; nor were any of the rest men of much reputation, either for learning or sanctity. Leighton alone formed one exception, and Kirkton, who is not very willing to praise whoever accepted the prelatic dignity, thus notices his appointment: "Mr. Robert Leighton, then principal of Edinburgh college, was made bishop of Dumblane; thus he choised to demonstrate to the world, avarice was not his principle, it being the smallest revenue; a man of good learning, excellent utterance, and very grave abstract conversation, but almost altogether destitute of a doctrinal principle, being almost indifferent, among all the professions that are called by the name of Christ." We are indebted to Burnet for an account of the manner in which the bishopric was offered, and he was induced to accept of the nomination.

His brother Elisha had devoted himself to the court, and in order to serve his ambitious purposes, had changed his religion; in this he appears to have succeeded, for he became at once a papist, a knight, and secretary to the duke of York; he was a person of considerable talents and vivacity, loved to talk of great sublimities in religion—yet very immoral. Living in terms of close intimacy with Lord Aubigny, a brother of the duke of Richmond, a great favorite at court, who had also changed his religion, and though a priest, was likewise "a very vicious man," he brought Mr. Robert Leighton and him together. Aubigny, who was acquainted with the then secret of the king's religion, which was popish, and with his design to establish it if possible, was induced by the representations of Sir Elisha, and by the mild manners of Leighton himself, to suppose that he might be rendered subservient to the scheme, and mentioned him to King Charles, who had sufficient penetration to perceive that the accession of such a man to the Scottish prelacy would be of immense importance, named him himself as one of the number. Leighton was exceedingly averse at first to the proposal, but the entreaties of royalty, and the urgency of his brother, who expected to rise still higher through his means, with some faint expectation that he might be instrumental in moderating or healing the differences of the truly devout of the two persuasions, overcame his reluctance, and he at last accepted, yet not without a struggle, as the letter, which is supposed to have been written while he was deliberating, evinces. It was addressed to the Rev. Mr. Aird.*

If this letter was written after the first parliament in which the king's supremacy was established, and by which Argyle and Guthrie were condemned, it shows how much Leighton had abstracted himself from the occurrences of the day, and how little he was acquainted with the politico-theological state of the country, that he should entertain even the slightest hope of advancing the interest either of peace or religion, by accepting a bishopric in Scotland, and connecting himself with a band of apostates, who had so iniquitously commenced their atrocious career. His whole life proved, that Leighton was wholly uninfluenced by sordid or secular motives; but while we acknowledge his principles to be pure, and his personal behavior exemplary, it may fairly be questioned how far in this instance his conduct was justifiable, in holding fellowship with those who framed mischief by a law, who gathered themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemned innocent blood; but as he foresaw, it proved to him a life of suffering, and he was, after years of mental anguish, forced to withdraw from the scene, and from all participation in measures, of which he left a strong condemnatory sentence in his affirmation to Charles, that "he would not consent to propagate Christianity itself by such means."

The following letter appears to have been written about this time:—

"Dear Friend: I did receive your letter, which I would have known to be yours, though it had no other sign but the piety and affectionate kindness expressed in it. I will offer you no apology, nor I hope I need not, for not writing since that to you. I will confess, that if the surprising and unexpected occasion of the bearer had not drawn it from me, I should hardly for a long time to come, have done what I am now doing, and yet still love you more than they do one another that interchange letters even of kindness, as often as the gazettes come forth, and as long as they are too. And now I have begun, I would end just here: for I have nothing to say, nothing of affairs to be sure, private nor public; and to strike up to discourses of devotion, alas! what is there to be said, but what you sufficiently know, and daily read, and daily think, and, I am confident, daily endeavor to do; and I am beaten back, if I had a great mind to speak of such things, by the sense of so great deficiency in doing these things, that the most ignorant among Christians can not choose but know. Instead of all fine notions to fly to κυριε ἐλεησον χριστε ἐλεησον, I think them the great heroes and excellent persons of the world, that attain to high degrees of pure contemplation and Divine love; but next to those, them that, in aspiring to that, and falling short of it, fall down into deep humiliation and self-contempt, and a real desire to be despised and trampled on by all the world. And I believe that they that sink lowest into that depth, stand nearest to advancement to those other heights: for the great King who is the fountain of that honor, hath given us this character of himself, that he resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble. Farewell, my dear friend, and be

* Life, page 16.

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upward to remember a poor caitiff who no day forgets you. R. L. 13th Dec., 1676."

Sydserf, the withered twig of the old stem, not being sufficient to communicate the undefinable sacredness of the prelatic character to a new generation, four of the bishops elect were summoned to the English capital, to receive from the fathers of London and Worcester such gifts as they could bestow by the imposition of their "holy" hands. Sharpe and Leighton having received presbyterian ordination, they hesitated about being reordained, but as it was determined that presbytery should be destroyed root and branch, that was declared invalid, and after some short disputation, they submitted to receive the orders of deacon and priest, previously to their consecration as bishops. Hamilton and Fairfoul had previously in 1638 received the orders from the abrogated Scottish hierarchy, which were held good. To this act, which desecrated the whole of the Scottish ministers, even had they been inclined to conform, Leighton is said to have reconciled his mind by an evasion—that the new ceremony was only declaratory of his admission into a new communion, but did not destroy the sanctity of his former ordination; a distinction which presbyterians would not readily be brought to comprehend.

Consecrated, however, they all were at Westminster, on the 12th December, 1661, with much clerical splendor, and a series of feasting between the nobles and the bishops followed, which grieved Leighton's pious soul, and gave plain augury of what kind of church they were about to establish. It is perfectly clear there was no community of soul between them; Sharpe hated and opposed him, and even Sheldon "did not much like his great strictness, in which he had no mind to imitate him," though both he and the rest of the English clergy greatly preferred him before his brethren, whom he excelled, not more in the extent of his learning, than in the uprightness of his walk and conversation. His trials began almost immediately.

When the revelry had ceased, he endeavored to prevail upon Sharpe to settle some plan for their future procedure, and proposed for his consideration—first, his favorite project of attempting to bring about a union between the presbyterians and them; next, the best means for promoting the growth of piety; and then a method for gradually assimilating the mode of worship among the two persuasions. But he was sorely disappointed to find that the primate had formed no plan, and was unwilling to hear of any. He only looked forward to coercive measures; episcopacy he knew would be established in the next parliament, and when once they were legally settled in their dioceses, then he said every bishop must do the best he could to get the people and clergy to submit to his authority; time to proceed to regulate other matters. Fairfoul had always "a merry tale ready at hand to divert him" whenever the subject was started, so that he found it impossible to hold any serious conversation with him, of which indeed he did not seem capable. "By these means," adds Burnet, "Leighton quickly lost all heart and hope; and said often to me upon it, that in the whole progress of that affair, there appeared such gross characters of an angry providence, that how fully soever he was satisfied in his own mind as to episcopacy itself, yet it seemed that God was against them, and that they were not like to be the men that should build up his church so that the struggling about it seemed to him like a fighting against God. He who had the greatest hand in it, Sharpe, proceeded with so much dissimulation, and the rest of the order were so mean and so selfish, and the earl of Middleton, with the other secular men that conducted it, were so impious and vicious, that it did cast a reproach on everything relating to religion, to see it managed by such instruments." About the middle of next year they set out for Scotland, but Leighton, understanding that they meant to make a grand entry into Edinburgh, left them at Morpeth, and proceeded forward alone; the rest were received by the magistrates in their robes, with sound of trumpet, or, as was sarcastically remarked, "with the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music," at the hearing of which, the people were to fall down, and worship the prelates whom the king had made. Leighton proceeded directly to Dumblane, and not only declined sharing in these pageantries, but even requested that his friends would not give him the title of "lord," a request which, however consonant with the injunctions of his heavenly Master, was by no means agreeable to his earthly brethren.

Episcopacy was set up by proclamation, the meetings of synods and presbyteries were forbid by the same authority, but it required an act of parliament to restore the bishops to their jurisdiction and their seats. This was done the first of the session in 1662, in the most ample manner, and as soon as it was passed, the prelates who were in waiting, were invited by a deputation from each estate to resume their places in the house which they immediately did among the earls on the right hand of the commissioner, Leighton on this occasion also forming the only solitary exception. He was not, however, long suffered to enjoy his retirement, and the occasion which called him from it is highly honorable to his memory. Several ministers, John Carstairs, James Nasmyth, James Veitch, and some others, were accused of using seditious language in their sermons, but the accusations could not be substantiated: as was the custom, however, in these

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times, if a charge was brought against a presbyterian, and could not be proved, instead of being set free, the oath of allegiance, in which the king's supremacy in all affairs civil and ecclesiastical was asserted, was offered them, and they were required to take it as a mark of loyalty. In this case the ministers were brought before parliament, and had the oath tendered. They required time to consider it, and after some days' serious deliberation, gave in an explanation, in which they declared, "they believed the king was supreme governor over all persons, and in all causes, not only civil but ecclesiastic; but that the power of the king is, in its own nature, only civil and extrinsic as to causes ecclesiastical." This explanation the commission refused, upon which a debate arose, whether an act explanatory of the oath should be offered to parliament or not; Leighton strongly urged the propriety of its being done: the land, he said, mourned by reason of the multiplicity of oaths, and the words of the present were certainly susceptible of a bad sense; the papists in England had been allowed this privilege of explaining, and he thought a like tenderness should be shown to protestants, especially in a case where their scruples appeared to be just, otherwise it would look like laying snares for the people, by making men offenders for a word. Sharpe replied with great bitterness: he said that it was beneath the dignity of a government to frame acts to satisfy the scruples of peevish men, and it ill became them who had forced their covenant on all ranks, without distinction or explanation, to come forward now, and ask such a license for themselves."—"For that very reason," retorted Leighton, "it ought to be granted, that the world may perceive the difference between the present mild government, and their severity; nor does it become persons who complain of that rigor, to resort to similar harshness, lest thus it might be said, the world goes mad by turns." But his arguments were of no avail; the ministers were required to take the oath or undergo the penalty, imprisonment or exile; they refused to subscribe, and preferred to suffer: and Leighton had only the consolation of having attempted in vain to avert their oppression.

For several years we do not meet with the bishop's name in any of the political transactions of the times, but we find from his charges to his clergy, and some few letters which have been preserved, that he was far more honorably employed, in fulfilling the spiritual duties of his office. Of the difficulties with which he had to contend, some idea may be formed, from the character of the clergy over whom he was called to preside; this we are enabled to give from an episcopalian writer, and therefore the less liable to objection. At the close of the year 1662, about two hundred faithful ministers of Christ, rather than violate their consciences, gave up their livings in the west of Scotland; and of these a number belonged to the diocese of Dumblane, of which an imperfect list is given in Wodrow's Appendix. To fill their places, Burnet says, "there was a sort of an invitation sent over the kingdom, like a hue and cry, to all persons, to accept of benefices in the west; the livings were generally well endowed, and the parsonage-houses were well built and in good repair, and this drew many very worthless persons thither, who had little learning, less piety, and no sort of discretion." "They were the worst preachers I ever heard, they were ignorant to a reproach, and many of them were openly vicious, they were a disgrace to their order and the sacred function, and were indeed the dregs and refuse of their northern parts. Those of them who arose above contempt or scandal, were men of such violent tempers, that they were as much hated as the others were despised. This was the fatal beginning of restoring episcopacy in Scotland, of which few of the bishops seemed to have any sense." Only two non-conformists' names appear in the roll of the presbytery of Dumblane, which formed that part of the diocese more immediately under the bishop's eye: whether this was owing to the influence and persuasion of Leighton, or whether the list be incomplete, it is impossible now to determine; but I should be rather apt to suppose the latter, as Wodrow affirms, that the clergy of the diocese formed no exception to the general character of these west country brethren.

No blame, however, can attach to Leighton for this; he has left us his recorded opinion of the manner in which he thought a people should be treated, with regard to spiritual teachers, in a letter he wrote to the heritors of Straiton, and which it would be well did the present patrons of presbyterian churches imitate.*

The person here recommended was Mr. James Aird, who had been a minister at Ingram in Northumberland, and was then residing in Edinburgh; he was afterward minister at Torrey, so that it would appear the heritors at Straiton had not taken the bishop's advice. The following letter to the same gentleman, was probably written upon this occasion; it is without date. "Dear Friend: I trust you enjoy that same calm of mind touching your present concernment, that I do in your behalf. I dare not promise to see you at Edinburgh at this time, but it is possible I may. I know you will endeavor to set yourself on as strong a guard as you can, against the assaults you may meet with there from diverse well-meaning persons, but of weak understandings and strong passions, and will maintain the liberty of your own mind, both firmly and meekly. Our business is the study of sincerity and pure intention, and then, certainly our blessed guide will not

* Life, page 20.

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suffer us to lose our way for want of light; we have his promise, that if in all our ways we acknowledge him, he will direct our paths. While we are consulting about the turns and new motions of life, it is sliding away, but if our great work in it be going on, all is well. Pray for your poor friend, R. L. Dumblane, Jan. 13th."

We have, in a beautiful epistle—without date or address—his views of the temper and disposition he thought those should cultivate, whom he wished to introduce into the ministry.*

Part of the diocese in Dumblane in the vicinity of the Highlands, was at this period among the ruder portions of Scotland, and from the state of restlessness and contention in which they were kept up by their neighbors, labored under the demoralizing influence of border customs; the bishop therefore, in his charge, September, 1662, expresses his anxious desire, that "all diligence be used for the repressing of profaneness, and for the advancement of solid piety, and that not only scandals of unchastity, but drunkenness, swearing, cursing, filthy speaking, and mocking of religion, and all other gross offences be brought under church-censure, and that scandalous offenders should not be absolved, till there appeared in them probable signs of true repentance." Although he does not mention the discipline of the presbyterians, he urges upon his clergy the exercise of the most commendable parts of their practice —catechising, visiting, and frequent expounding of the Scriptures. At the Reformation, and before the commonalty could read for themselves, there were public readers appointed in the church, and the hour between the second and third ringing of the kirk bell on the Sabbath, was usually employed in reading portions of the Old and New Testaments to the people; this practice, which had fallen into disuse as education became more diffused, Leighton wished to revive, and urged upon his curates the advantage of making their people well acquainted with the pure word of God, by carefully reverting to this good old custom. He also strongly recommended their taking large portions of Scripture, and lecturing from them, rather than raising a theme from a single text, for he thought a number of short practical observations from a series of verses, preferable to a long dissertation from one.

He wished likewise to establish daily public prayer, and reading the Scriptures morning and evening in churches, in as far as these did not interfere with the private or family worship of the people; which duties he was extremely anxious to promote: as he was also of a more frequent celebration of the Lord's supper; but, above all, he propounded to the brethren, that it was to be reminded by himself and them, both to how eminent degrees of purity of heart and life their holy calling did engage them, and to how great contempt of this present world, and inflamed affections toward heaven, springing from deep persuasions within them of those things they preached to others; and that they should be meek and gentle, and lovers and exhorters of peace private and public, among all ranks of men; endeavoring rather to quench than to increase, the useless debates and contentions that abounded in the world, and be always more studious of pacific, than polemic divinity.

While this excellent prelate was assiduously, but calmly, endeavoring to alleviate the evils by which he was environed, the furious and insane council, dogged by the unprincipled crew of bishops and curates, who were determined to force upon the nation a hierarchy they universally detested, proceeded with the most cruel and inconsiderate rashness, to desolate the church and the country by measures to which no conscientious and enlightened people could ever submit. Oaths opposed to every principle which had been recognised as sacred for nearly thirty years in Scotland, were proposed to men who feared an oath, and those who sincerely believed in the divine institution of presbytery, were required to renounce it, merely because their rulers deemed it expedient that they should do so, and to join a church whose form they considered unscriptural; and whose clergy they viewed, and if Burnet's description be true, justly viewed, as children of the devil.

Had the people been like their priests or their rulers, indifferent at once to the reality and the form of religion, whatever guilt might have attached to compliance, there would have been little hardship: but educated as they had been, and well informed and well grounded as they were in their principles, numbers chose rather to suffer than to sin, and counted not their lives dear unto the death, that they might hold fast their integrity; the consequence was, that the land, like the prophet's scroll, from one end to the other, was lamentation, and mourning, and wo. Leighton, placed in the most trying of all possible situations, wept over what he could not prevent; and, after a sickening struggle of about three years, resolved to withdraw from a situation as painful as it was unprofitable. In October, 1665, after the business was over, he communicated his intention to the synod. In a short address, he told them that all the account he could give of the reasons moving him to it, was briefly the sense he had of his own unworthiness of so high a station in the church, and his weariness of their contentions, which seemed rather to be growing than abating; and by their growth, to make so great abatements of that Christian meekness and mutual charity, that is so much more worth than the whole sum of all they contended about. He then thanked the brethren for all their unde-

* Life, page 20

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served respect and kindness manifested to himself, and desired their good construction of the poor endeavors he had used, to serve and to assist them in promoting the work of the ministry, and the great designs of the gospel in their bounds; and if in anything, in word or deed, he had offended them, or any of them, he very earnestly and humbly craved their pardon; and having recommended them to continue in the study of peace and holiness, and of ardent love to our great Lord and master, and to the souls he hath so dearly bought, he closed with these words of the apostle: "Finally, brethren, farewell; be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, and live in peace, and the God of peace and love shall be with you."

He was however prevailed upon, first to proceed to court, to give a faithful representation of the miseries of the country, which he the more willingly did, as it was then supposed that the king's easy, careless good nature, imposed upon by Sharpe, would, when undeceived, sympathize with the sufferers, and consent to more moderate methods. But Charles was an accomplished profligate, and one of the most selfish of mortals: his own enjoyment was the sole end of his existence, to that he sacrificed honor, veracity, and friendship, and everything that an honest man would have held estimable; he had however a plausibility of manner, that imposed on the guileless or superficial observer. Leighton was imposed upon. When introduced to the king, he told him freely that the proceedings in Scotland were so violent, that he would not concur in planting the Christian religion itself in such a manner, much less a form of church government; and he therefore begged leave to quit his bishopric, and retire, for while he retained it, he thought he was in some manner accessory to the violence of the ecclesiastics with whom he was associated; as it was given out that all these outrages were intended to establish their order. The king seemed touched with the statements when he heard them, and promised that more lenient measures should be pursued; laid the blame chiefly on Sharpe, and insisted upon the bishop's resuming his labors. According to Burnet, the consequence of these representations was an order from Charles to discontinue the ecclesiastical commission, and perhaps the king might claim some little merit with Leighton for this, but the Scottish historians assert, that that court had already become contemptible with all ranks and parties; and, no longer able to carry its own oppressive decrees into execution, was, if not defunct, at least on the point of expiring.

Leighton however returned with renewed expectations, but it was only to meet with renewed disappointment. Sharpe at the head of the council managed all as he chose —persecution continued to increase—and religious men were confined, imprisoned, and banished, because they would not consent to attend the ministrations of those curates whose character we have quoted above from an eyewitness, and an episcopalian. Leighton could only sigh, like the prophet, "Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them!" His letters in general want dates, and of course can not be accurately arranged, but a fragment quoted by Jerment may not improperly be placed about this time: "Thorns grow everywhere, and from all things below, but to a soul transplanted out of itself into the root of Jesse, peace grows everywhere too, from him who is called our peace, and whom we still find the more to be so, the more entirely we live in him, being dead to this world and self, and all things beside him. O when shall it be! Well! Let all the world go as it will, let this be our only pursuit and ambition, and to all other things, Fiat voluntas tua, Domine, 'Lord, thy will be done!'"

In the political arrangements respecting the church, he had never taken much part, but in the meetings of his synod he appears to have been more interested, though, from a wish not to appear haughty or domineering, he had suffered irregularities to pass unnoticed, which it would have required a stronger hand to repress. "I confess," says he, in his address to them, April, 1667, "I confess that my own inactive and unmeddling temper may be too apt to prevail against the known duty of my station, and may incline me rather to inquire too little than too much into the deportment of others; and rather to be deficient, than to exceed in admonitions and advices to my brethren in matters of their duty; and besides this natural aversion, the sense of my own great unworthiness and filthiness may give me check, and be a very strong curb upon me, in censuring others for what may be amiss, or in offering any rules for the redress of it. And there is yet another consideration that bends still further that way, for I am so desirous to keep far off from the reach of that prejudice that abounds in these parts against the very name of my sacred function, as apt to command and domineer too much, that I may possibly err on the other hand, and scarce perform the duty of the lowest and most moderate kind of moderator, so that I am forced to spur and drive myself against all these retardments, to suggest anything, how useful soever, beyond our road or accustomed way, especially finding how little anything of that kind takes and prevails to any real effect."

This humble and mild introduction was prefixed to a charge intended to remind them of their inattention to former instructions and admonitions, and to recommend particularly the "privy trials" of ministers in their presbyteries: these were examinations by the presbytery into the doctrine their members preached, the manner in which they ful-

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filled the duties of their office, and their moral and Christian conduct as ministers of the gospel; in which he said he had perceived in some places very much of superficial and empty form. He therefore proposed a series of queries for their consideration, which he thought might be useful: "For though," he remarks, "we can have nothing but every man's own word concerning himself, yet this does not render it a useless thing, for besides that divers of the questions will be of things so obvious to public knowledge, that no man will readily adventure to give an untrue answer where it may be so easily traced, there is much to be given to the presumed ingenuity and veracity of a minister, especially in what is solemnly and punctually inquired of him—and whatsoever formerly hath been or hath not been, his former degree of diligence in the particulars, the very inquiry and asking concerning them will be apt to awake in every man a more serious reflection upon himself touching each point."

These questions were—whether he were assiduous in plain and profitable preaching? diligent in catechising? frequent in celebrating the communion? faithful in the exercise of discipline? attentive in visiting his flock? careful of the relief of the poor? and plain and free in admonishing open transgressors? Then, as the personal conduct of the clergyman was what could alone give weight and efficacy to his reproofs and instructions, more pointed queries followed: whether he watched exactly over his own conversation, not only giving no offence, but being an example to his flock, and preaching by his living? whether it be the great pleasure of his life to fulfil the work of his ministry? if he does not only avoid gross offences, intolerable in a guide of souls, but studies daily to mortify pride, rash anger, vain glory, covetousness, and love of this world, and sensual pleasures, &c., and finally, whether he be at peace with his brethren, and be an ardent lover and promoter of it among the people?

From his pastoral charges it will be perceived that Leighton prized highly some of the characteristic features of presbytery, and it redounds greatly to his honor, that he not only did not persecute the profession he had forsaken, or behave harshly toward his former fellow-laborers, but he retained as much of the form as he legally could, and as much of the practice as was attainable, while he treated the "outed" ministers as his brethren. He thought, however, that the mode of conducting public worship admitted of improvement, especially with regard to reading the scriptures when the congregation was assembled, these he recommended to be read in larger portions, and also that the Lord's prayer, the ten commandments, and the creed, should be more frequently repeated; a practice for which he had the authority of the earlier reformers. How far Dumblane profited by his unwearied exertions and pious example, it is impossible to say; but as he is still held in grateful remembrance in that quarter, it is reasonable to suppose that his labors were not altogether in vain.

Among his fellow prelates his conduct had only the effect of deepening the shade of their turpitude by the purity of its lustre. "I observed," says Burnet, "the deportment of our bishops was in all points so different from what became their function, that I had a more than ordinary zeal kindled within me upon it. They were not only furious against all that stood out against them, but were very remiss in all the parts of their function. Some did not live within their dioceses, and those who did, seemed to take no care of them. They showed no zeal against vice; the most eminently wicked in the country were their particular confidants, they took no pains to keep their clergy strictly to rules and to their duty; on the contrary, there was a levity and a carnal way of living about them, that very much scandalized me." And he tells us, that in a memorial which he wrote upon this occasion, he showed how they had departed from the primitive church, by neglecting their dioceses, meddling so much in secular affairs, raising their families out of the revenues of the church, and above all, by their violent persecuting of those who differed from them. While Leighton was pursuing his peaceful and holy avocations, the primate was revelling in the blood of the unfortunate covenanters, whom oppression had driven to resistance, and who had been scattered at Pentland, and the whole west and south were filled with prelatic vengeance, and legal and military executions.

Political events, 1667, which for a short time terrified Charles from his despotic projects, transferred the management of Scottish affairs into the hands of Lord Tweedale, who, together with Lauderdale, by whom he was supported, was disgusted with the violence of Sharpe and his associates, and wished to restore his suffering country to some kind of tranquillity. Ecclesiastical grievances being the chief source of all the distractions, he entered into a close communication with the bishop of Dumblane, who was again prevailed upon to go to London, where he had two audiences of the king; in these, he represented with honest freedom the madness of the former administration of church affairs, and the necessity of more moderate councils; Charles listened, and promised, and did nothing. Leighton returned to his charge, where he remained, till in 1669 he was again called upon by Tweedale to make a new effort for restoring peace to the church. Ever anxious to promote this object, the dearest to his heart, he hastened to lend what assistance he could. He proposed that a treaty of accommodation should be attempted with the presbyterians, for the purpose of setting the differences completely at rest, by each party yielding somewhat of their alleged rights and



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mutual demands. His plan was somewhat similar to that species of episcopacy under which he had been trained, and on which he acted in his own diocese; he proposed that the church courts should be retained, and that the bishops and ministers should act together in them, the bishops being ex-officio perpetual presidents, or moderators—that the presbyterians should be allowed, when they first sat down in these judicatories, to declare, that their sitting under a bishop was submitted to by them only for peace' sake, with a reservation of their opinion with relation to any such presidency—and that no negative vote should be claimed by the bishop: that bishops should go to the churches, in which such as were to be ordained were to serve, and hear and discuss any exceptions that were made to them, and ordain them with the concurrence of the presbytery: that such as were to be ordained, should have leave to declare their opinion, if they thought the bishop was only the head of the presbyters. And he also proposed, that there should be provincial synods to sit every third year, or oftener if the king should summon them, in which complaints of the bishops should be received, and they censured if deserving. Burnet's expression is amusing, "and they should be censured accordingly," implying perhaps unintentionally, what was really the fact, that if their conduct were ever brought before a church, censure must be the inevitable consequence. The same writer alleges, that Leighton, in making these concessions, acted upon the same policy that James VI. did, only let the bishops, however loosely, be peaceably acknowledged, and they will gradually and eventually acquire a complete power in the church. This, for the sake of Leighton's character, I am willing to believe a misconception of his views. It is not improbable that the statesmen with whom he associated might have used such arguments to influence the episcopalians to comply with propositions which went to reduce their antichristian domination, but that Leighton ever held out any such inducements, is not at all likely, especially as in the above propositions he seems only to have embodied his earliest principles. The Earl of Kincardine, one of the leaders in the council, was not averse to concessions being granted to the presbyterians; but he was of opinion that these concessions ought to be legalized by an act of parliament, and then it was probable they would submit to what they could not help, while, if proposed beforehand, they would set themselves to state objections, and ender an agreement more hopeless than ever. Leighton coincided with him in opinion, and Burnet was despatched to sound Mr. Hutchison, a cousin-german of his own, and in high repute among the presbyterians, but he was of opinion it would not meet the wishes of either party. Lauderdale objected because, being the chief manager of Scottish affairs, and suspected of favoring the presbyterians, he was afraid lest the English bishops should think he was sacrificing the cause of episcopacy to their enemies. The idea of an accommodation between the parties was therefore given up at this time.

Yet the state of the country required that something should be done. The people would not attend the places where the curates, "a set of men so ignorant and so scandalous," officiated, while they flocked to hear the zealous and able presbyterian, or, as they were then called, "outed" ministers, who now were forced to betake themselves to the fields, and beneath the wide canopy of heaven, proclaim the truths of the everlasting gospel. It was in consequences suggested, that a number of these ministers should be allowed to serve in the vacant parishes under certain restrictions, a fettered liberty, in opposition to the standing law of the country, which was granted by the king under the ironical name of an "*indulgence*," and which was followed by one of the most oppressive acts that ever was framed for burdening the consciences of men, whose highest crime was contending for the headship of Christ in his church.

This was the first of the parliament 1669, asserting his majesty's supremacy over all persons, and in all cases ecclesiastical, by virtue whereof, the ordering and disposal of the external government and policy of the church was declared properly to belong to the king, and his successors, as an inherent right of the crown. This, which was an *ex post facto* legalizing of the king's stretch of power in granting an indulgence,* was not agreeable to Leighton, yet he voted for it, although he afterward expressed his regret at having allowed himself to be betrayed into such a compliance. Burnet, archbishop of Glasgow, and all "his set," who allowed the king every exorbitant prerogative that he chose to claim, when the object was to crush presbytery, now complained loudly when the prerogative was exerted to favor it. His majesty's supremacy asserted by the act, was immediately applied to chastise such insolence, and his grace of Glasgow, rather than dispute the point, took the hint, and retired for a time upon a pension.

No one of the worldly, ambitious, and detested prelates, possessed either the esteem of the people, or the confidence of the government; Leighton in these respects stood alone, and his pre-eminence pointed him out as the only fit person to fill the arch-episcopate Burnet had been forced to resign. "It was easily found," Sir George Mackenzie remarks, "that the bishop of Dumblane was

* Burnet says the words "ecclesiastical matters" were interpolated after Leighton had seen the act; but this is a very lame justification—the very title of the bill implied them, and the whole bill, not a very long one, asserts in the most unqualified manner the ecclesiastical supremacy of the king. Leighton's easiness of temper is the only excuse.

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the most proper and fit person to serve the state in the church according to the present platform of government now resolved upon; for he was in much esteem for his piety and moderation among the people, and as to which the presbyterians themselves could neither reproach nor equal him. Albeit they hated him most of all his fraternity, in respect he drew many into a kindness for episcopacy by his exemplary life, rather than debates. His great principle was, that devotion was the great affair about which churchmen should employ themselves, and that the gaining of souls, and not the external government, was their proper task; nor did he esteem it fit, and scarce lawful to churchmen to sit in councils and judicatories, these being diversions from the main. And albeit his judgment did lead him to believe the church of England the best modelled of all others, both for doctrine and discipline; yet did he easily conform with the practice of the Christians among whom he lived, and therefore lived peaceably under presbytery till it was abolished. And when he undertook to be a bishop himself, he opposed all violent courses, whereby men were forced to comply with the present worship beyond their persuasions; and he had granted a latitude and indulgence to those of his own diocese, before the king had allowed any by his letter. This made the world believe that he was author to his majesty of that public indulgence, and the statesmen who were unwilling to be authors of an innovation, which some there thought might prove dangerous, were well satisfied to have it so believed; but however, these principles rendered him a fit instrument in their present undertaking." The earls of Lauderdale and Tweedale therefore urged him to accept the see, but he was strongly averse, and for some time so resolutely declined, that Gilbert Burnet, professor of divinity in Glasgow, and all his friends, became exceedingly uneasy, and it was only the hope of being able to achieve an accommodation that at length induced him to consent to the proposal; though only to hold the see in commendam, that is, administer the affairs without being ordained to the office.

As soon as he had agreed to accept, the king commanded his attendance at court, and on his way thither he called upon the professor, with whom he had a long consultation, but received poor encouragement, for Burnet says, he told him that he expected little good, only he thought an accommodation not altogether impracticable. Upon his arrival in London, he found Lauderdale strangely altered in his temper, for having triumphed over all his rivals, he was become fierce and intractable: the scheme of accommodation was judged improper, and toleration by royal authority, was deemed the preferable mode for conciliating the country, and exalting his majesty's prerogative. Yet the archbishop's arguments prevailed with the king, and his plan, corrected by Sir George Murray, was turned into instructions for Lauderdale, the lord high commissioner, with authority to legalize all the concessions; but from what afterward appeared, there was every reason to believe that Charles had, with his usual duplicity, given secret directions that the whole should be frustrated.

Being fully occupied with his new charge, the archbishop found it impracticable to attend the meeting of the Dumblane synod this year, but he still was careful for their welfare, and sent them a truly pastoral letter.*

He was not less anxious about the good conduct of the clergy in his new charge. He found the whole country filled with reports to their disadvantage, which, as we have seen by Burnet's account, were far from being ill founded. The archbishop therefore appointed a committee, consisting, not of the members of his own synod alone, who were too notorious themselves to be trusted with any such delicate task, but comprising those who stood fairest in the episcopal church, Mr. Charters, Mr. Nairn, and Mr. Aird, to take cognizance of the complaints that might be lodged against them. So soon, however, as the council were apprized of the measure, under pretext of countenancing and assisting the committee in discharge of their duty, they nominated Sir John Cochrane, of Ochiltree, Sir Thomas Wallace, Sir John Cunningham, Sir John Harper, the provost of Glasgow and Air, to attend and act along with them, but in reality to prevent too rigid an exercise of discipline, for they knew the west country curates could not bear even the mild inspection of Leighton; and the consequence was, that the good intentions of the archbishop were rendered almost entirely abortive.

The committee met in September, when the parishioners were invited to lodge their complaints, but their first acts went to narrow as much as possible the avenues to redress; they required, that whoever did not fully substantiate by legal proof any complaint he brought forward against a minister, should stand before the congregation clothed in sackcloth as a slanderer. This effectually prevented many, who were aware of the difficulty of proving what they knew to be true, from coming forward; but there were some cases so flagrant, that the curates rather preferred to take a little money and retire, than stand trial, with all these advantages; of the accusations that came before them, the result was—one deposed, and four removed to other charges; what the crimes were that that they visited thus heavily, we are not informed, but if we may judge from one case which they dismissed without reproof, they were no trifles.

It is thus recorded by Kirkton, who was no friend of Leighton, and reflects not more dis-

* Life, page 32.

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credit on the unworthiness of the committee, than honor on the zeal of Leighton: "One Jeffray, curat of Maybole, sometime before alleadged he hade been assaulted for his life by his parishioners, and this he proved by producing a book which hade been contused by a pistoll ball, and this book he alleadged hade saved his life; for he said he hade it upon his breast betwix his uppercoat and his doublet, but his uppercoat was neither pierced nor contused. However, he brought his complaint against his people, before the committee that sat at Air about that time. This he did in hopes to get his paroch fyned in 100 lib. English, and the money to himself; but because he not only failed in his evidence, but by the circumstance of the action made all Scotland say he hade contused the book with his own pistoll, no money he got, but the hatred of the people. These thinking they may now have justice before this goodly purgeing committee, accuse him there, and prove him guilty of many gross scandals, such as swearing, strikeing, fighting, and drunkenness, notwithstanding all which, the committee absolved him, which made Leighton so much ashamed, that out of the plenitude of his power, he thought fit to forbid him the exercise of his ministry."

For some time Leighton continued to reside partly at Dumblane, and partly at Glasgow, but being consecrated in the month of October, he took full possession of the archbishopric, and went to reside in the city of Glasgow. His predecessor had used every violent method to force the people to attend the ministrations of the vile, immoral, and illiterate crew of curates who filled the pulpits in the west, and when the soldiers left his diocese, lamented that they had carried the gospel along with them! He proceeded upon a very different plan. Soon after his settlement he held a synod of his clergy. As was to be expected, their churches were deserted, and themselves despised; and never considering that their own conduct, and want of ministerial talents, were the true reasons of their being treated with contempt by a well-informed and a religious people, they had expected that their new right reverend father would, like the former, collect their scattered flocks by the aid of military evangelists:—He preached to them, and in his discourses, both public and private, exhorted them to look up more to God, to consider themselves as the ministers of the cross of Christ, to bear the contempt and ill usage they met with, as a cross laid on them for the exercise of their faith and patience; to lay aside all the appetites of revenge, to humble themselves before God, to have many days for frequent fasting and prayer, and to meet often together, that they might quicken and assist one another in holy exercises, and then they might expect blessings from Heaven upon their labors: "This," adds Burnet, "was a new strain to the clergy—they had nothing to say against it, but it was a comfortless doctrine to them!" There was no quartering of soldiers, and no levying of fines—so they went home as little edified with their new bishop, as he was with them.

Grieved at the low state of his episcopal clergy, the good man looked with an eye of longing regard to his former esteemed and pious co-presbyters, and visited several of the indulged ministers, for the purpose of persuading them to listen to propositions of peace, but he found the truth of Solomon's observation, that "a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and their contentions are like the bars of a castle." He told them that some of their number would quickly be sent for to Edinburgh, where conciliatory terms would be offered them—that they would be met in sincerity, and without artifice, and if they in return would cordially acquiesce, the concessions would be turned into laws, and all the vacancies would be filled up with their brethren. The ministers who had suffered severely, and were well acquainted with the character of the Scottish rulers, both civil and ecclesiastical, whose whole conduct toward them had been a uniform system of oppression and deceit, received the archbishop's communications with great coolness; they suspected the proffer to be, what we now know it to have been, upon the part of the government, a snare to entrap and to divide them; and they answered with prudent caution, that it was a matter of general concern to the whole body, in which they as individuals could do nothing.

Although it might have been anticipated, yet the reception he met with grieved and discouraged Leighton, who began to lose heart in a negotiation where he had to struggle with so many difficulties, tyranny, and insincerity, on the part of the government, and well-grounded suspicion and conscientious scruples on the part of the sufferers. He did not, however, give up his endeavors; with him it was a labor of love, and however much mistaken in his views, he was without doubt sincerely aiming at the blessing pronounced on the peacemakers. At his request, Lauderdale wrote to some of the most eminent of the indulged ministers in his diocese, among whom were Mr. Hutchison, Mr Wedderburn, and Mr. Baird, requiring them to attend a conference before himself, Tweedale, and Kincardine, at Edinburgh, August 9, 1670. Sharpe would not appear, but Patterson (afterward archbishop of Glasgow) was present along with Leighton. The latter opened the business by deploring the divisions that prevailed among them, and the mischief they had done; that souls were perishing while they were contending about matters of infinitely less importance, and entreated them to do each what lay in his power to heal so disastrous a breach: for his own part he was convinced, that from the days of the apostles, there always existed an order of bishops su-

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terior to presbyters in the church, and that complete equality among clergymen had never been heard of till the middle of the last century, when it was introduced rather by accident than design; yet in the proposition he had to make, he would not insist upon this—by his plan they would not be required to surrender their opinions on that point, while they might unite in preaching the gospel, and carrying on all the ends of their ministry. They had moderators among them, which was no divine institution, but only a matter of order; the king, therefore, might name them; and making them constant, was certainly no such encroachment on their rights, as should break the peace of the church; nor did blessing them with imposition of hands, when they entered upon their office, imply any invalidity in their former ordination—they were still ministers. Some imagined that a new authority was conferred, but they would be required to submit to nothing more than to their presidency, and even as to that would be allowed to exonerate themselves, by protesting as formally and publicly as they chose. Hutchison replied: he said their opinion, respecting a parity among ministers, was well known—that the presidency now proposed, had formerly served to introduce a lordly dominion in the church, and however inconsiderable their present pretensions might be, they would serve to pave the way for future higher demands, and therefore requested time to consider and consult with his brethren.

A second meeting was accordingly appointed in November, when the whole dined together by the Lord High Commissioner Lauderdale's invitation. After dinner his lordship joined them, in hopes that his presence might awe the parties into mutual concession; but when he found that the presbyterians were not prepared to surrender their principles, he was with difficulty restrained from bursting out into one of his outrageous fits of passion, by which he had latterly been accustomed to overawe his political adversaries. Leighton, who knew how vain it would be, persuaded him to rest quietly, and hear the ministers' objections. They were the same as stated at the former meeting, in which they had been confirmed by reflection and intercourse with the other presbyterians, who all coincided in opinion, that the accommodation was merely a scheme to lull their vigilance asleep, and render them subservient to the triumphant establishment of episcopacy, when the present supporters of presbyterianism should be laid in the grave.

Thus the conference ended without being productive of any advantage to the archbishop's wished-for conciliation; but the presbyterians were not the only enemies to an adjustment, although perhaps the only conscientious ones. Sharpe was violently against the accommodation. "Episcopacy," he exclaimed, "was undermined;" and the inferior clergy, Burnet tells us, hated the whole thing, "for they thought, if the presbyterians were admitted into churches, they would be neglected."

When the conference ended, Leighton did not despair: he knew the aversion the people had to come to any terms with the profligate clergy of a persecuting church, and he also knew the influence which their decided opinions in this matter had upon the ministers. He therefore adopted another method for attaining his darling object, and endeavored to engage them upon his side; he could get no assistance from his own diocese. "The episcopal clergy in the west could not argue much for any thing and would not at all argue in favor of a proposition they hated;" but he employed six divines of that persuasion, of a higher character, and from a different quarter—Messrs. Burnet, Charters, Nairn, Aird, Cook, and Paterson—to perambulate the country, preach in the vacant churches, and explain to their hearers the grounds of the accommodation. They were tolerably, not numerously attended, and they had little success in the object of their mission; they had to do with a people who understood the subject, and who seem to have astonished the episcopalians. "We were indeed amazed to see a poor commonalty," says one of their number, "so capable to argue upon points of governments, and on the bounds to be set to the power of princes in matters of religion; upon all these topics they had texts of scripture at hand, and were ready with their answers to any thing that was said to them. This measure of knowledge was spread even among the meanest of them, their cottagers and their servants. They were indeed vain of their knowledge, much conceited of themselves, and were full of a most entangled scrupulosity, so that they found and made difficulties to every thing that could be laid before them."

Another attempt was yet again made by Leighton for accommodation. But at the very moment when he was holding out proffers of friendship, the parliament were enacting statutes of blood! Can it be at all wonderful in such a case, that the negotiations terminated unfortunately? His opponents knew, that however they might be disposed to trust him, not the smallest confidence could be placed in his associates. They notwithstanding met him, first at Paisley, where twenty-six or thirty presbyterian ministers were present. There some small alteration was made in his overtures, but Messrs. Hutchison, Wedderburn, Baird, and their companions, still perceived the horns of the mitre, and, with the old fathers of presbytery, refused to accept them, even when "busket ever sae bonnily."

Two meetings upon the 11th and 26th of January, 1671, at Holyrood-house, closed the conferences. In one of these, Leighton offered to dispute for episcopacy against pres-

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bytery; but this being illegal, and what might have subjected his opponent to a capital punishment, Mr. Hutchison refused. On which Burnet, who was present, appearing to triumph, Mr. Wedderburn declared he would accept the challenge, if the lord chancellor would authorize him; but his lordship declining, no more was said upon the subject.

Finding all his endeavors to promote peace and concord ineffectual, and his plans either thwarted, or at least not seconded by those from whom he might have expected support, he resolved, as infirmities were beginning to threaten him, to retire from a field in which there was no prospect of usefulness. He was suspected by the high episcopalian party, and had no influence with the presbyterians; and in reply to the arguments of Burnet for his continuing in that station, he said, "his work seemed to be at an end; he had no more to do, unless he had a mind to please himself with the lazy enjoying a good revenue." A mode of spending the residue of life very different from what he contemplated. "Our joint business," said he in a letter to his sister, apparently written about this time, "is to die daily to this world and self, that what little remains of our life, we may live to Him that died for us. For myself, to what purpose is it to tell you, what the bearer can, that I grow old and sickly, and though I have here great retirement, as great, and probably greater than I could readily find anywhere else, yet I am still panting after a retreat from this place, and all public charge, and next to rest in the grave. It is the pressingest desire I have of anything I have in this world, that I might be with you or near you. But our heavenly Father, we quietly resigning all to him, both knows and will do what is best." This letter is dated from Dumblane, to which place he delighted to resort during the intervals of his archiepiscopal labors, and whence he wrote an admirable pastoral letter to his synod.*

He had found Lauderdale extremely unwilling to accept of his resignation, as that nobleman knew well the value of such a character for supporting the already almost hopeless hierarchy in Scotland; he therefore, in the summer of 1673, repaired to London, and tenderedit personally to the king. Charles, too, was averse to his retirement, but the archbishop was resolute, and his majesty agreed, that if he would continue another year upon trial, he should then be allowed to resign, if still of the same mind. He returned rejoicing with the royal engagement in writing, and observed to Dr. Burnet, that "there was now but one uneasy stage between him and rest, and he would wrestle through it the best he could." His professional duties were performed with his usual zeal and assiduity during the appointed time, at the close of which he hastened to London, and cheerfully laid down his high office, which some changes in the aspect of the practical affairs of Scotland occasioned to be received without more difficulty.

Various reports were spread at the time respecting this transaction, but there is no reason to suppose that the causes were other than those which he has himself left on record. They have been preserved in MS. in the University of Edinburgh.*

After he had retired from public life, he spent some time in a farewell visit to the university of Edinburgh, and his letters accord with the feelings one loves to indulge in visiting, for the last time, scenes in which the most active years of life have passed. One is to Mr. Lightmaker, his sister's husband, on the death of a beloved child; the other to a lady laboring under mental distress, but to whom he was personally unknown.†

"I am glad of your health, and the recovery of your little ones; but indeed it was a sharp stroke of a pen that told me your little Johnny was dead, and I felt it truly more than, to my remembrance, I did the death of any child in my lifetime. Sweet thing, and is he so quickly laid to sleep? Happy he. Though we shall no more have the pleasure of his lisping and laughing, he shall have no more the pain of crying, nor of being sick, nor of dying, and hath wholly escaped the trouble of schooling and all the sufferings of boys, and the riper and deeper griefs of upper years, this poor life being, all along, nothing but a linked chain of many sorrows and of many deaths. Tell my dear sister she is now so much more akin to the other world; and this will quickly be passed to us all. John is but gone an hour or two sooner to bed as children used to do, and we are undressing to follow. And the more we put off the love of the present world and all things superfluous beforehand, we shall have the less to do when we lie down. It shall refresh me to hear from you at your leisure. Sir, your affectionate brother—R. Leighton."

Finally retired from public life, he removed, after a short stay in Edinburgh, to Broadhurst, in Sussex, an estate belonging to Mr. Lightmaker, his sister's husband, and with these dear relations he remained till within a short period of his decease. Little is recorded of these years, and it would be in vain to fill with conjectural speculations a space of which we are only told that it was occupied with deeds of charity and labors of love; that he preached frequently in the pulpits to which he had access, and that here, as in all his other abodes, the poor and the ignorant were the objects of his peculiar care. The serene tenor of his course was, however, once interrupted by an unexpected call from the king to resume his high functions in Scotland. The extreme of persecution having been tried in that country, only produced its usual and natural effects, the people became more exasperated against

* Life, page 34.

* Life, page 36.

† Life, pages 41, 44.

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a church to which they were thus attempted to be dragooned. And the duke of Monmouth, who had witnessed the unfeeling tyranny of the prelates, and the unmitigated misery of the people, during his residence there, influenced both by compassion and political motives, made an effort to introduce milder measures; and the consequence was the following letter from Charles: "WINDSOR, *July* 16, 1679. MY LORD: I am resolved to try what clemency can prevail upon such in Scotland as will not conform to the government of the church there; for effecting of which design, I desire that you may go down to Scotland with your first conveniency, and take all possible pains for persuading all you can, of both opinions, to as much mutual correspondence and concord as may be; and send me, from time to time, characters both of men and things. In order to this design, I shall send you a precept for two hundred pounds sterling upon my exchequer, till you resolve how to serve me in a stated employment. Your loving friend, CHARLES R.—*For the bishop of Dumblane.*" But the power of Monmouth declining shortly after, the proposition fell to the ground, deliverance came to the presbyterians from another quarter, and the venerable bishop was left quietly to pursue the method of life that he loved, to meditate upon eternity, and to prepare for it. The Scriptures were daily the men of his council, and the book of Psalms was especially a portion which he perused with delight himself, and recommended to others. The sabbath was his delight, and no slight hinderance could detain him from the house of prayer. Upon one occasion, when he was indisposed, the day being stormy, his friends urged him, on account of his health, not to venture to church: "Were the weather fair," was the reply, "I would stay at home, but since it is otherwise, I must go, lest I be thought to countenance by my example the irreligious practice of allowing trivial hinderances to keep me back from public worship." But perhaps the highest eulogium that can be passed on the uniform holiness of his character, is the effect that it had on his brother-in-law, who, upon daily beholding it, exclaimed, "If none shall go to heaven but so holy a man as this, what will become of me?" and became so deeply impressed with a sense of the importance of pressing forward unto perfection, that he relinquished a profitable business, lest it should too much entangle him, and devoted his remaining years to the care of his soul.

In 1684, Leighton was induced to come to London upon a visit of mercy. Lord Perth, who had participated in all the atrocities of the times, arrived in the English capital to be invested with the office of lord high chancellor of Scotland, and whether from some temporary compunctious feeling or some pretensions to it, had earnestly requested Burnet to procure him an interview: "I thought," says the bishop,* "that angelic man might have awakened in him some of those good principles which he seemed once to have, and which were now totally extinguished in him;" and at his urgent desire Leighton came to London. "I was amazed to see him," continues Burnet, "at about seventy, look so fresh and well, that age seemed as it might stand still with him; his hair was still black, and all his motions were lively: he had the same quickness of thought and strength of memory, but above all, the same heat and life of devotion, that I had ever seen in him. When I took notice to him upon my first seeing him, how well he looked, he told me he was near his end for all that, and his work and journey both were now almost done. This at that time made an impression on me. He was the next day taken with an oppression, and as it seemed with a cold and with stitches, which was indeed a pleurisy. The day after Leighton sunk so that both speech and sense went away of a sudden, and he continued panting about twelve hours, and then died without pangs or convulsions. I was by him all the while. Thus I lost him who for so many years had been the chief guide of my whole life." He died in the seventy-fourth year of his age, and was interred at Horsted Keynes, where his brother Sir Ellis had been buried only a short time before; an unostentatious inscription marks the place where his dust rests in hope: Depositum, Robert Leightounj Archiepiscopi Glasguensis apud Scotos, qui objt XXV die Junij Anno Dmj 1684, Ætatis suæ 74.

Two remarkable circumstances attended his death. He used often to say, that if he were to choose a place to die in, it should be an inn, it looking so like a pilgrim's going home, to whom this world was all as an inn. It was his opinion also, that the officious tenderness and care of friends, was an entanglement to a dying man, and that the unconcerned attendance of those who could be procured in such a place, would give less disturbance: this wish was granted; it was at the Bell inn, Warwicklane, where he expired. Another was, that while bishop in Scotland, he never harassed his people for his stipend, small as it was, not above £130 per annum at Dumblane, and only about £400 at Glasgow, but generally took what they were pleased to pay, by which means considerable arrears were due when he left, and the last remittance which he had reason to expect, arrived about six weeks before his death. His will, which had been written a short time before, shows however, that although not rich, he yet had something to leave.†

But his liberality was not deferred till he could no longer hold a grasp of his money. He allotted every penny beyond what was barely necessary for his personal expenses, to pious and benevolent purposes. When prin-

* History of his own times anno 1684.
† Life, page 53.

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cipal of Edinburgh university, he founded a bursary, and for that purpose gave £150 to the city: when at Glasgow he allotted to the poor of Dumblane, a considerable sum due to him by a gentleman in that place; he appropriated £300 for three bursaries in Glasgow university, and as much for maintaining four old men in St. Nicholas hospital. During his retirement in Sussex, "he distributed," says Dr. Burnet, "all he had in charities, choosing rather to give it through other people's hands than his own: for I was his almoner in London." To enable him to be charitable, he was abstemious: his sister, we are told, once asked him to eat of some delicate dish; he declined, saying, "What is it good for but to please a wanton taste—one thing forborne is better than twenty taken." But, asked his sister, why were these things bestowed upon us? To see, he answered, how well we can forbear them—and then added, "Shall I eat of this delicacy while a poor man wants his dinner?" The same sister, upon another occasion, imagining he carried indifference to worldly things too far, remarked to him, "if you had a wife and children, you would not act thus." His reply was, "I know not how it would be, but I know how it should be—Enoch walked with God, and begat sons and daughters." Humility was one of the most distinguishing features of his character, of which many instances are given in the preceding pages, and so conspicuously did it shine, that, in order to dim its lustre, his enemies were constrained to doubt its reality, and describe it as affected; but it was too unostentatious, too general, and too consistent, to be false. Indeed, personal holiness was the main object of his life, so much so, that when he heard of any changing their profession of religion, he would ask when they became holier?

His natural temper was singularly gentle and amiable, and endeared him to all with whom he had any intercourse, and overcame in many of his opponents the prejudices his dereliction of their party inspired; though in the latter part of his life, even from the partial statements of his pupil and friend, he does not seem to have been greatly enamored of the change he had made. "He lamented oft to me the stupidity that he observed among the commons of England, who seemed to be much more insensible in matters of religion than the commons of Scotland were. He retained still a peculiar inclination to Scotland, and if he had seen any prospect of doing good there, he would have gone, and lived, and died among them." He looked on the state the church of England was in, with very melancholy reflections, and was very uneasy at an expression then used, that it was the best constituted church in the world. He thought it was truly so with relation to the doctrine, the worship, and the main part of her government. But as to the administration, both with relation to the ecclesiastical courts, and the pastoral care, he looked on it as one of the most corrupt he had ever seen. He thought we looked like the fair carcase of a body without a spirit, without that zeal, that strictness of life, and that laboriousness in the clergy that became us." His conversation is represented as having been eminently heavenly and spiritual, "and he had brought himself," says the writer so often referred to, "into so composed a gravity, that I never saw him laugh, and but seldom smile, and he kept himself in such a constant recollection, that I do not remember that I ever heard him say one idle word." Most probably the state of the country and the church, tended greatly to produce this general solemnity of manner, for he was deeply affected with public events. How he could improve little incidents is well illustrated by an answer he made to a remark of some of his friends, "you have been to hear a sermon." "I met a sermon, a sermon *de facto*, for I met a corpse, and rightly and profitably are the funeral rites observed, when the living lay it to heart." Bishop Leighton's stature was small, and his countenance benignant. That he was slender, we learn from an exclamation of his, when told that a corpulent person had died: "How is it that A——— has broken through these goodly brick walls, while I am kept in by a bit of flimsy deal?" He would never sit for his picture, and the engravings we have of him, were done from one taken by stealth, but which those who knew him pronounced to be not a bad likeness, though it did not do full justice to the mild expression of the original.

It only remains to notice his theological works. Their praise is in all the churches. Episcopalians, presbyterians, and independents, have concurred to express their high admiration of their unrivalled excellence.*

"Perhaps," says Mr. Orme, in his *Bibliotheca Biblica*, "there is no expository work in the English language equal altogether to the exposition of Peter. It is rich in evangelical sentiment and exalted devotion. The meaning is seldom missed, and often admirably illustrated. There is learning without its parade; theology divested of systematic stiffness; and eloquence in a beautiful flow of unaffected language and appropriate imagery. To say more would be unbecoming, and less could not be said with justice."

Jerment, in his life of Leighton, thus writes: —"The modesty of Leighton was the more comely and ornamental, that it was joined to high intellectual capacity and attainments, and to the graces of elocution. His acquaintance with literature was various and profound. Of a quick and capacious understanding; of an elevated genius and refined taste; of a vigorous and elegant fancy; of a reten-

* Doddridge's judgment is declared in his preface and Pearson's Critique is found in the life, pp. 47, 48

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tive memory—he drank deep at the springs of knowledge, by close application, and almost incessant study. Our author had perused with care and delight the Roman and the Greek classics. His Latin would do honor to the Augustan age; and is not inferior in purity and strength to the style of the learned and polished Buchanan. The Hebrew was quite familiar to him, and he possessed a critical knowledge of that concise and energetic tongue. He understood French well; and could both speak and write the language with correctness and ease. He knew philosophy in the greater part of its branches; and had read with attention and profit, history, sacred and profane, civil and ecclesiastical, ancient and modern. Divinity, however, was his principal study; and he was truly a master in Israel. Of the most of these rare and useful endowments his writings afford abundant and incontrovertible evidence.

"Leighton used all his learning as a handmaid to religion, and employed it in the service of the sanctuary. He derived theology cal knowledge, not so much from human systems as from the sacred oracles; and that knowledge received a mellowness from his own natural and gracious placidity. At times a Boanerges in sentiment; he was usually, both in sentiment and style, a son of consolation. The cotemporary bishops of the north, compared with him, were dwarfs in mind, and wolves in disposition. There were bright constellations of divines, both in England and Scotland. But Leighton shone pre-eminent above the majority; and was a star of the first magnitude. Among the first preachers of his own day, he has never been surpassed, taking him all in all, since that period. More sententious than Reynolds, more refined than Howe, more eloquent than Baxter; less diffuse and argumentative, but more practical than Charnock; less profound, but clearer and more savory than Owen; less ingenious, but sweeter and more sublime than Hall—he will not suffer by comparison with any divine, in any age."

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# LETTERS.*

## I.

SIR: I see there is no place, city or country, valley nor mountain, free from that sentence so early passed upon the earth for man's cause, "thorns and briers shalt thou bring forth;" but he that is well shod walks on the safelier till he comes where there are none: but seeing that is not here, we are to use the greater coolness and deliberation in our removes. If your present company be some way irksome, a greater solitude may prove more so: only if God both sensibly fits you for it, and points clearly out the way to it, follow him; otherwise my advice should be not to hasten too much, and particularly at no hand so to hasten as to run in debt for it; for I speak it on experience, he that sets up anywhere in debt, it will keep him possibly wrestling at and under many years; but if you let your incomes do their own business, *pian piano*, as they come to your hand, you will find it much easier to do, and sweeter when it is done: meanwhile I know you can digest all a little longer, as hitherto you have done. To your other point touching baptism, freely my thought is, it is a weak notion taken up on trust almost generally, to consider so much, or at all, the qualifications of the parents. Either it is a benefit to infants, or it is not. If none, why then administered at all? But if it be, then why should the poor innocents be prejudged of it for the parent's cause, if he profess but so much of a Christian as to offer his child to that ordinance? For that it is the parent's faith gives the child a right to it, is neither clear from Scripture, nor any sound reason; yet in that I heartily approve your thoughts that you would make it, as it most fitly may be, an active inducement to the parents to know him and his doctrine, and live conformed to it, unto whose name they desire their children to be baptized. But in this, and the other business, and in all things, I am confident that good Hand, to which I know you have given up yourself, will graciously guide you . . . . . they miscarry that desire to h . . . . . will but his. Oh let it still entirely be so with you and your resigned friend,

R. L.

'Tis well our great journey is going on, and will quickly set us where we would be. The business you write of is to you one signal step of it, marked out by that sovereign hand which, I doubt not, will lead you in it, and all along through what remains, to whom I know you are constantly——

* The following letters exhibit Archbishop Leighton in his private intercourse, as an amiable man, and a tender, faithful friend. As his biography comprised not any circumstances to which they particularly referred, they are placed at the end of the volume.



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II.

Sir: Some days ago I received some lines from you, and they were very welcome; for I know no better news can come from any corner of the earth, than of a soul attempting to overcome the world and its own self, and in any degree prevailing and resolving still onward; all the projects and conquests of the world are not to be named to it. Oh! what a weariness is it to live among men, and find so few men; and among Christians, and so few Christians; so much talk and so little action; religion turned almost to a tune and air of words; and, amid all our pretty discourses, pusillanimous and base, and so easily dragged into the mire, self and flesh, and pride and passion domineering, while we speak of being in Christ, and clothed with him, and believe it because we speak it so often and so confidently! Well, I know you are not willing to be thus gulled, and having some glances of the beauty of holiness, aim no lower than perfection, which in end we hope to attain; and in the meanwhile, the smallest advances toward it are worth more than crowns and sceptres. I believe that you often think on those words of the blessed champion *Paul*, 1 Cor. ix. 24, &c. There is a noble guest within us. Oh! let all our business be to entertain him honorably, and to live in celestial love within, that will make all things without be very contemptible in our eyes. I should rove on did not I stop myself, it falling out too well for that, to be hard upon the post hours, ere I thought of writing. Therefore, good-night is all I add; for whatsoever hour it comes to your hand, I believe you are as sensible as I that it is still night; but the comfort is, it draws nigh toward that bright morning that shall make amends.

Your weary fellow-pilgrim,
R. L.

It may be Mr. Ogle did not think me in earnest when I desired him to spy out a hermitage for me; but if one remote enough were offered, I know not how it might tempt me. Meanwhile, it is well; but if you say anything of this, then it will cost you withal the remembering my service to him and the rest. If you write again, I pray you load not the back of your letters with any more than this—To Mr. *Robert Leighton*, at *Edinburgh;* for by that it will not fail to find me out, and that answers the end, and you see I give you example.

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III.

Sir: Though I desired you to forbear for a while the pains of sending me the book you spoke of, I know it was your kindness pressed you to send it, and I thank you. I can not say I have read it through, but divers passages of it I have; and though I approve the design of it and all such writings so far as I understand, and what I understand not, adventure not to judge of, but rather *implicitè* think the best of it, yet I must confess, their lowest rules that are laid as the foundation of their structure, I find of most use; and, could I duly follow them, either I should insensibly be raised to those greater sublimities they speak of, if the great lover of souls saw any such thing good for me, or I should humbly and contentedly live without them, which possibly would do as well till the day come of fullest and purest intuitive life, which I live in the hopes as not far off. Meanwhile I think I have at a venture given up with the contemptible desires and designs of this present world, and must have either something beyond them all, or nothing at all: and though this *βορβορωπος ὑλη*, this base clod of earth I carry still depresses me, I am glad that even because it does so, I loathe and despise it; and would say, *major sum, et ad majora genitus, quam ut mancipium sim istis corpusculis.* I have sent you two little pieces of history, wherein it may be you will find small relish, but the hazard is small; and, however, I pray you do not send them back to me at all, for I have enough of that kind. The one is of a good pen, and an acquaintance and friend of yours, *Paulus Noloneas*, and his Life of Martin of Tours, I think you will relish, and I believe is not in your *Vitæ Patrum.* The other, *Valerius Maximus*, I conceived, would cloy you the less, because it is of so much variety of selected examples, and the stages are so short, you may begin and leave off where you will, without wearying. But when all is done, there is one only blessed story wherein our souls must dwell and take up their rest; for among all the rest we shall not read, *Venite ad me, omnes lassi et laborantes, et ego vobis requiem prestabo;* and never any yet that tried him, but found him as good as his word: to whose sweet embraces I recommend you, and desire to meet you there.

Yours,
R. L.

Oct. 24, 1659.

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IV.

Sir: The answer I intended your letter was a visit, and that not *en passant.* Though I spoke and once had thoughts of *Newcastle* for some days, my last purpose was no farther than *Ingram*, unless it had been with you to Wittingham, to see your honest neighbor Mr. *Hume;* which if you think of it when you meet, it may be you will tell him. Nor was this a mere thought, for I was on my way toward you as far as *Ginglekirk*

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whence I returned back to my lodge, finding myself not well, by reason, I think, of not scarce having been on horseback twice these many months. I am yet in a little distemper; of which, though I apprehend no great height nor long continuance, yet I am doubtful whether I shall again, this vacation, attempt any farther than *Pentland Hills*. But it is no matter; blessed be He in whom souls may meet and concentre in constant rest, and in renewed thoughts and desires intervisit, every day, in despite of large lumps of earth. And, in much greater matters, how little imports the defeat of our purposes as to anything without us, if it please him to shine on and advance our great business within! O! what is all the world to it, to that bright purity we aspire to, and the blessed eternity we hope for! And how great reason have we to say, *non magna relinquo, magna sequor!* I thank you for the notice of your capuchin; but I almost knew that he was not here before I looked. It is true the variety of his book refreshes us, and by the happy wording, the same things not only please, but sometimes profit us; but they tell us no new thing, except it may be some such thing as, I confess, I understand not, of essential unions and sleeps of the soul; which because I understand not, would rather disorder and hinder than advance me; and therefore I begin to be unwilling to look over these and such like, unless I would pick out here and there such things as I am capable of, and not meet with those steep ascents which I dare not venture on. But dear *à Kempis* is a way to it, and oh! that I could daily study more, and attain more sublime, humble devotion there drawn to the life ..... most soaring treatises I have ever yet met with, find any th .....certain and solid use that is there not plainly and Di ..... proque est paucis opus et ..... paucis libris ad bona me ..... could we once thoroughly despise our own base flesh, and the vain opinion of the world, and live in the divine will, as dead to all things beside, and gladly take the lowest room, he can, if he please, call for us to go up higher. Oh, but the misery to have sin, lust, and pride, and self-will, and self-love, and desire of esteem among men, not only living, but, alas, lively and strong; and yet, however it be, let us not faint in our minds, for in the name of the Lord we shall destroy them. And in the meantime, blessed—ever blessed—be his name, who hath called us to fight under his royal standard, and given us to resolve to live and die there. Amen.

Your fellow-soldier.

R. L.

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## V.

Dear Brother: I wrote to you lately, and troubled you with the story of my present and daily growing unhealthiness, which can no add much, but something it does, to my wonted longings for the evening, not without hopes that it shall likewise prove a bright and sweet morning. Meanwhile it is no great matter where I pass the few hours that remain, yet I told you I had some thoughts of spending them nearer you, but have not yet resolved; but that and all shall be disposed of as is best. Mr. *Aird*, who gives you this, I believe, you have heard me speak of, as one acquainted with my free thoughts, and that hath himself a free, unprejudiced soul, and loves truth and devotion wheresoever he finds it, even in the greatest crowd of error or superstition about it. He hath a cell and a provision among the hills in the border of *England*, but is threatened with a removal upon the title of an old incumbent, who is at London or near it. If you be acquainted with Dr. *Cozens*, bishop of *Durham*, or can recommend him to him by any that is, if he himself desire it, or in any other way can assist him, I entreat it of you. Mrs. *Abernethy* tells me her son is in the king's life-guards: if you meet with him, and by recommending him to my lord *Gerrard's* favor, who commands it, or in anything else you can do him good, you will oblige both me and the honest widow. She makes often mention of you. *Cher Frère*, Adieu.

R. L.

March 5.

For Sir Ellis Leighton,
at St. James's.

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## VI.

Dear Friend: I wish, after your resolution taken, and I think σὺν Θεῷ, you had barred the door on all suggestions from without and within, that might have changed or in the least disturbed it. Sure I am the reason that convinced you is still the same, that what you may do, you may also promise if it be required; and I believe the design was so like to make you serviceable to God, and to souls that he hath bought, that you would never have had just reason to repent it. The like I dare not say of your now recoiling; and if I might again prevail with you, I entreat you to readvise the thing between God and your own heart, and that cleared, as much as you can, from all mist, both of the fancy of others and your own melancholy. If you would meet me at *Culross* or *Lithgow* any time the next week, and send me word what day or hour you choose, I would endeavor not to fail, or if coming to Edinburgh to speak with you, though at this time well I can not, might be likely to do any help toward dispelling the cloud that hath overcast your mind, I would not grudge the pains. All I can do at this distance, is to look up to Heaven, who alone powerfully can do it, and in his blessed hand I leave it,

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and you, and myself, and all that concerns us, and all the world; and whatsoever you do, never doubt the unalterable affection of

Your friend,

R. L.

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## VII.

Sir: What the opportunity is that may engage you where you are, seeing you express it not, I can not particularly know: but whatsoever it is, I shall be glad if it suit your mind, and if I could do you any real furtherance in any such thing, I think I need not tell you how ready the occasion would find me. Here I see nothing at present worth the thinking on for you, unless you have a mind to try a course of tilting for a regency in philosophy, as they call it, which is likely to be vacant here very shortly, Mr. *Wiseman* being upon the point of leaving it and going to sleep. If you find a stomach to it, all I can promise is, endeavor to see fair play; and if you make one you would be sure to win, if it depended on the wishes of

Sir,

Your Friend and Servant.

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## VIII.

Sir: I should please myself very much in doing anything toward your repose; but there is nothing such as I wish within my reach, nor within my view. The humanity place will either not be vacant, or if it be, I think we shall break it for some reason. Of the other I wrote to you, you can only judge whether it suits your genius and inclination; neither, if it did, have I power to promise anything but heavy endeavors if I see it feasible, having no assurance of prevailing. But one thing I am sure of, and so are you, and it is enough, that to them that fear the Lord and trust in him, no good thing shall be wanting. The choosing of some dubious steps of our way may now and then be a little troublesome, but the comfort is, the journey will be quickly done, and then we hope to be where there are no desires nor deliberations of change of quarters. I am,

Yours.

1 suppose you have heard of Mr. *Andrew Gray's* death. He has got the start of us, but not for long. I am likely to preach tomorrow, God willing, in our own hall, where for the present meets one of the town congregations.

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## IX.

Sir: I think you know the reason of my forbearing to write; for you can not but know that letters sent by the post are broken open very frequently, if not constantly of late; and other way I know none. I often entreated that favor of my *John* to inquire at your sister's how you were, if she did hear, and if she knew any safe convey of letters to you; but he did as he uses to do in divers of the few letter services I have for him, and I am beholden to his neglects. Meanwhile, my not forgetting you, you may be assured of, while I shall continue to remember myself. When I think how little or nothing it is my letters speak other than some short word, dropped as it comes, reflecting to you some of your own thoughts, I am pained with your reckoning them anything at all. Your imparting the particulars relating to yourself, though in extrinsic things, I do very heartily thank you for; for such communications are a redoubling the pleasure in them: and seeing our great Father's love descends to the ordering of the low concernments of our life, we were very unwise and ungrateful not to observe them, who hath made flies with so much art, and is truly *magnus in minimis*. Courage, it shall be well: we follow a conquering general; yea, who hath conquered already; *et qui semel vicit pro nobis, semper vicet in nobis*. For myself at present, I am, as we use to say, that is, this little contemptible lodge of mine is, not very well; but that will pass some way or other, as it is best; and even while the indisposition lasts, oh! how much doth it heighten the sweet relish of peace within, of which I can not speak highly; for to you I speak just as it is. But methinks I find a growing contempt of all this world, and consequently some further degrees of that quiet which is only subject to disturbance by our inordinate fancies and desires, and receding from the blessed centre of our rest: *for hurries of the world you know the way*, Isa. xxvi. 20; and in these retiring rooms we meet and be safe and quiet. That you may speak of the shock seeming to threaten your order, I an not afraid of at all, neither for you nor myself, nor the generality of the rest; but you may be assured, that, in that case, the lot of those in my posture will be the same with yours. *Sed Jehovah regnat, circuitor Gentis et cum reliquis etiam insulæ*. Farewell, dear brother.

Yours

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## X.

Dear Friend: Whether you know the particular purport of the enclosed you sent to me, I know not; but it is to quit ten pounds *sterling* supposed due to me from the party that pleads inability: and doubtless your recommendation, together with the charity of the thing, if it shall appear to be so, would easily give law to me for a greater sum than that. But the truth is, there is a main mis-

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take in the business, for it is not payable to me, and therefore no way in my power, for my lord *Bargeny* hath a lease of all my little dues in these parts for nineteen years, upon very easy terms as they inform me; yet whether he will consider that so as to make such an abatement of what is now his due and not mine, I can not tell; neither have I any power to carve upon what is his without paying it back, or some way compensing it to him myself; and yet even that I shall not decline, if, after you and I both know the more particular state of the business and the person, you shall judge it reasonable. This is all I can say to that at present; and I will not enter upon any other discourse by this; for the truth is, there is little to be said and much to be done. You and I are, I trust, upon a design that will reflect a very low estimate upon all below it, and it shall certainly succeed if we be careful to stick to our Leader, and follow him. Pray for

Your poor friend and servant,

R. L.

March, 1660.

To the Rev. Mr. Aird.

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## XI.

Dear Friend: I am very sorry for the indisposition you are under, but I assure you I do not value myself, nor anything I say or do either upon this or any other occasion, worth your pains of writing, far less on a journey hither; yet I should gladly enjoy your mistake in thinking otherwise, if I was in a posture capable of the pleasure others have of your abode under my roof for some longer time. The persons you mention in order to that affair, &c., I have not seen nor heard anything from any of them since my last, nor expect that I shall till the beginning of *June*, at *Edinburgh*, where I intend, God willing, to be, and desire, if it may be, to see you there. I have thoughts of going thither somewhat before that time, and therefore, if I did not signify such to you, I fear you might miss me if you came hither.

As for the business, it is very safe, with all our other interests of time and eternity, in our blessed Father's hand, of all fathers the wisest and the best. He, I am sure, can mould either your heart or theirs you have to do withal, as he thinks fit, and it shall be as it is best to be; therefore if we were together, I should not very eagerly dispute the matter with you, far less will I by scribbling. Let your heart keep near to him, and be daily purging out all that may interpose and obstruct our closest union, and we have nothing else to care for. This moment is posting away, and that blessed day is hastening forward that shall complete that union.

Pray for your lame fellow-traveller,

R. L.

I should chide you, if I could do it sharply enough, for entertaining the least thought of any such jealousy, as I think very incongruous with the strength and mutual confidence of solid friendship.

Received at Carmarthen, May 14, 1668.

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## XII.

Sir: Waving all other discourse till meeting, though you are possibly enamored with your vacancy, yet if you find any return of appetite to employment in the ministry, I am once again to offer you an invitation, for there is a place or two now vacant at my disposal. It is true it is by the removal of the former incumbents against their will, but you are not guilty of that by succeeding them, nor I by giving a call to any that will; for you may be sure they are not within the bounds I have charge of, but in other dioceses. There is one place indeed in my precincts now vacant, and yet undisposed of, by the voluntary remove of a young man that was in it to a better benefice, and this is likewise in my hand; but it is so wretchedly mean a provision, that I am ashamed to name it—little, I think, above five hundred marks a year. If the many instances of that kind you have read have made you in love with voluntary poverty, there you may have it: but wheresoever you are or shall be for the rest of your time, I hope you are advancing in that blessed poverty of spirit that is the only true height and greatness of spirit in all the world entitling to a crown, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Oh! what are the scraps that the great ones of this world are scrambling for compared with that pretension! I pray you, as you find an opportunity, though possibly little or no inclination to it, yet bestow one line or two upon

Your poor friend and servant,

R. L.

Edinburgh, July 5, 1662.

To Mr. James Aird.

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## XIII.

Sir: I long to hear how you dispose of yourself, if it be determined. If still in suspense, I still wish you the favorable impression of that hand to which I know you have delivered up yourself; if you be resolved upon a removal, and incline to the like charge here upon a fair call, I desire to know it, by the first opportunity, for I hear there is somewhat of that kind in the west likely to be at my disposal: I would not have this unsettle your pretension to stay where you are, if you find anything within you, for thorns grow everywhere, and from all things below: and

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to a soul transplanted out of itself into the root of Jesse, peace grows everywhere too, from Him who is called our peace, and whom we still find the more to be so, the more entirely we live to him, being dead to this world, and self, and all things besides him. Oh! when shall it be? Well, let all the world go as it will, let this be our only pursuit and ambition, and to all other things *fiat voluntas tua Domine*—that both is painful in some instance is the dubiousness.

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## XIV.

Dear Friend: Being at present not well, I shall say no more but that I take these communications as a singular act of the truest kindness and friendship, and heartily thank you for them, and am glad to find that there are some souls in this world truly sick of it all; that being, in my mind, a very happy symptom and prognostic of a prevailing health—such a degree of it, at least, as may be had in the diseased, defiled cottages wherein we dwell, and may be to us a certain pledge of real beginning of that full health we look for at our removal, and therefore have so much reason to long and wish earnestly and sigh and groan for that day, and yet have no less reason to wait patiently for it. Pray for

Your poor friend,
R. L.

March 21, 1669.

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## XV.

Dear Friend: I was refreshed by the account of your feast in your former, of which I trust I was participant as to the blessing of it, for though absent, I was heartily with you in desire. The accident your letter acquaints me with, I think concerns you little or nothing; for if there was any offence in the printing it, it rests upon him that procured it, and the printer; but for instructing your own flock in what way you judge most accommodated to them, who can blame you? However, when I meet with the archbishop, I shall, God willing, represent the business to him as it is, if I find it needful; but if you think it hath come to his knowledge, and that with with some misreport and disguise, I believe it might not be amiss for you to give him the true and ingenuous account yourself by a letter, for, it may be, some weeks may pass before I see him.

But oh! how quickly will all these things be gone, and even at present a look beyond them makes them disappear! Let us manage our ways as prudently and profitably to our main end as we can, and let the world descant as they will. Blessed are the upright in heart, for their great Judge and Master sees into the heart, and can not mistake them. Pray for

Your poor friend,
R. L.

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## XVI.

Dear Friend: I do very much commend the activeness of your charity in the journey you have taken; for the success, though I had much desire and some little hopes of better, yet I suspected how it might prove, unless this one consideration, the extreme necessity of this church at this time, did prevail with our friend to do violence to himself. I hope you both pardon me for the very reason that I moved it, and that I am but to be angry or impatient at it, I could not pardon myself. I look to Him who makes everything beautiful in its season, and remember that saying of his, "Your time is always ready, but my time is not yet." As we are to forbear forbidden fruits at all times, so not to pull the best fruit in his garden till he allows us, and some way signifies he thinks them duly ripe for use.

I do heartily thank you for the kindness of communicating the enclosed letters; for next to what is within me, the painful reflecting I have on this world is, that there is so small a part of mankind in whose breasts such thoughts are stirring, and am somewhat relieved when I meet with anything of that kind, and long to meet with more, or be gone where no such wishes are needful. O! this dark night is very long; but blessed hope of that bright morning without cloud that is hastening forward. Well, no more, but pray for

Your poor friend and servant,
R. L.

I beseech you pain me not again with so excessively canonical a superscription of your letters, for there is no need of it, though they were to pass through twenty hands. Since I wrote this, I received another of yours for Mr. *Blair*. The truth is, for the next year I am already engaged to one that both needs and deserves a little help, and am bespoke for another to succeed the year after, but have not absolutely promised, and I therefore am at a little more liberty to consider it against that time, if it please God to continue me here so long; for the youth you name you may be assured, if it can fall on that side, his relation to our brother, and your recommendation, will have very much weight to make it so, and that is all I can say of it at present.

For my Rev. brother Mr. Aird,
Minister at *Torriburn*.

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## XVII.

Sir: I wish I could punctually resolve you concerning that freedom of commencing to that excellent work which you desire; but the truth is, though I believe they are not there so straightlaced by far as here, yet you having never exercised at all in public, I am not sure they would not all inquire concerning that, but it is likely nothing would be required which, if you be not superstitious on the other hand, would trouble you. If you thought fit in the meantime to spend some weeks in that place you speak of, and to use the liberty of it in exercising, it might possibly pass for what you would avoid in the other. And if a fair invitation shall come, he to whom you have resigned yourself will direct you.

Sir,

Your very affectionate friend.

To my own motions or stay, as I am in a most quiet indifferency myself, you, I am sure, may much more easily be so. We are at sea, and can not expect still to sail within speech, no nor within sight, but we hope to arrive at the same "fair havens."

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## XVIII.

Sir: There is one here come from *Ireland* to inquire after able young men for the ministry, whom they invite thither, sending them transport-money, and assuring them of a liberal and certain provision there. He they sent hath been with me, and was desirous to know if I could recommend any. It came into my thoughts to give you notice, that if you find any inclination that way, I may know. I will not advise you, much less press you in it, but leave you wholly to the freedom of your own thoughts and choice, and to the best hand to determine them. I believe they expect of those that go, an engaging to a pastoral charge; but whether for some time they may not give a little liberty to some or to one at least in a freer posture to preach, or whether their pastoral engagement be so indissolubly fast as here, I know not. You will think on that, and if you judge it worth so much, let me hear from you how you relish it. However, I wish you as to myself much happy success and advancement in your great design.

Your friend to serve you.

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## XIX.

Sir; The Lords of the Council having appointed some ministers from other parts, to preach in such churches within the diocese of Glasgow as do most need their help, I desire the Reverend Mr. *James Aird*, minister of Torry, to bestow his pains in that circuit that lies eastward from *Hamilton* or thereabouts, and particularly in the kirk of *Carluke;* not doubting that the minister thereof, and others in the like case, will very gladly receive and earnestly entreat what help he can do toward the bringing of their people to frequent the public ordinances, and the removing of their prejudices and calming of their passions, that they may with one heart worship that one Lord whose name we all profess to love and honor.

R. Leighton.

Glasgow, Sept. 17, 1670.

This is to recommend to the kind reception and assistance of the gentlemen and ministers, to whose parishes he shall resort, for preaching of the gospel, within the diocese of Glasgow, our Reverend brother, Mr. *Lawrence Charteris*, Minister at *Bar*, being nominated and appointed by the Lords of Council, with some others from other parts for that effect.

Glasgow, Sept. 20, 1670.

To Mr. *Charteris* are recommended, within the presbytery of *Paisley*, these kirks,

*Neelson*, *Kilbarchun*—vacant.

Likewise, if his health permit,

*Killelen*, and *Kilmacome*—though not vacant.

R. Leighton.

Oct. 19, 1670.

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